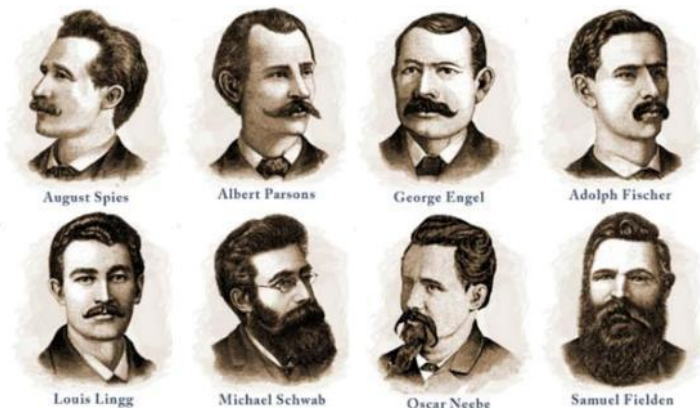


# Black Flag

## Anarchist Review



**Anarchy in  
the USA:  
The International  
Working People's  
Association**

**Marie  
Goldsmith:  
Scientist and  
Anarchist**



**Rudolf  
Rocker  
(1873-1958)**

**And much more...**

**Summer 2023**

**Volume 3**

**Number 2**



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## Editorial

We start with the International Working People's Association founded in 1883. As well as summarising its ideas, we also debunk claims that they were not, in fact, anarchists at all. We place the "Chicago Idea" within the context of the Federalist-wing of the International and show the similarities between it and the ideas of Bakunin and Kropotkin. As we show, the very thing – the cult of dynamite – used to portray them as "anarchists" is alien to the anarchist tradition while the labour activism which is used to suggest they are "syndicalists" or "Marxists" is what makes them anarchist.

It is not hard to conclude that those who claim the IWPA was not anarchist are simply expressing their ignorance of anarchism, a failure to read *The Alarm* and other writings or lack a wider understanding to place what they do read into the right context. We include a large selection of writings from IWPA members, mostly from *The Alarm*, which show their anarchist politics. While we doubt that this will stop historians or Marxists from suggesting the IWPA was anything other than anarchist, it will help anarchists and other seekers of the truth debunk such nonsense.

We then move on to Marie Goldsmith who, like Kropotkin, was a noted scientist as well as an anarchist. All the articles published in this issue of *Black Flag* – which focus on the lessons of the Russian Revolution – were translated as a part of the Marie Goldsmith Project, led by Søren Hough. It is an independent research initiative established to bring this remarkable – but largely forgotten – anarchist scientist's ideas into the twenty-first century (see their website <https://mariegoldsmith.uk/>). We are excited to work with the Project to make Goldsmith's writings accessible to the public, first in our Kropotkin issue of late last year (volume 2, number 3) and now in this issue.

We return to America with German-American anarchist Max Baginski. Not as well-known as his colleagues Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, he was an important member of the American movement for decades and helped make *Mother Earth* such an influential and important journal. We reprint a selection of his writings from *Mother Earth* on a wide range of subjects, including how he could – like Goldman – combine an appreciation of Max Stirner with advocacy of syndicalism. We hope his writings will be of interest to anarchists today.

Rudolf Rocker is next. Born 150 years ago and best known for his classics *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* (1938) and *Nationalism and Culture* (1937), Rocker was another important German anarchist who spent most of his life in exile. He played a key role in the East London Jewish labour movement and – after his imprisonment and then expulsion during the First World War – the anarcho-syndicalist movement during the German Revolution. He led the rejection of Bolshevism in the global Syndicalist movement and played an important role in the syndicalist International Workers' Association. Here we reprint a few of his lesser-known articles.

We end with Wayne Price's review of a new book on libertarian socialism and the good news that a collection of writings by Camillo Berneri has been published by Freedom Press. We included articles by Berneri in our Summer 2020 issue and his views on Kropotkin in our Winter 2023 one, so readers will know his importance as a thinker. We include an article not included in that book, a defence of the POUM published a few days before his assassination by Stalinists. We hope that comrades will find the book of interest and will support a long-standing anarchist publisher.

If you want to contribute rather than moan at those who do, whether its writing new material or letting us know of on-line articles, reviews or translations, then contact us: [blackflagmag@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:blackflagmag@yahoo.co.uk)

# Anarchy in the USA:

## The International Working People's Association

Iain McKay

In her report to the International Anarchist Conference held in Amsterdam in 1907, Emma Goldman noted that the Pittsburgh Congress of October 1883 saw the “beginning of Anarchism, as a distinct and independent movement in America”.<sup>1</sup> It was here that the International Working People's Association (IWPA) was formed and which grew in strength until the police riot of 4<sup>th</sup> May 1886 and the resulting Red Scare which saw eight anarchists tried for conspiracy with five losing their lives as a result of class justice.

We will not discuss the events in early May in Chicago nor their legacy in the shape of International Workers' Day here – they are too well-known.<sup>2</sup> Here we will concentrate on attempts by various writers to portray the Chicago Anarchists as something other than what they were, namely anarchist militants. As will become clear, these attempts – when not malicious – are the product of an ignorance of anarchist ideas and history. Needless to say, this does not absolve these historians as it is surely part of their job description to understand the theoretical and historical contexts of the individuals and movements they are commenting upon.

Debunking these claims will mean recounting events in the International and the conflict between Bakunin and Marx as well as explaining basic aspects of anarchism and Marxism. This is unavoidable as the accounts which proclaim the non-anarchist nature of the IWPA fail to define



anarchism and fail to provide relevant context in terms of Marxism. Once this is done, the obvious becomes clear – the Chicago Martyrs were the anarchists both they and the authorities thought they were.

### The Real Splits in the International

The origins of many of the misconceptions flow from a misunderstanding of the International and the role played by Marx and Bakunin within it. Far too often, commentators follow Marxist mythology on the matter so it is useful to note that Marx was not a “founder” of the International for he played no part in the discussions which lead to

its initial meeting in 1864. That honour rests with British and French trade unionists.

Marx, indeed, attended the founding Congress but did not speak. This is not to deny the important role he played in the organisation, the writing of its Rules and Inaugural Address (an address, incidentally, not given at the meeting but written weeks afterwards), and so forth. However, this early work was useful precisely because it did *not* reflect Marx's own political ideology (beyond a few vague comments in the Inaugural Address). He initially stressed that the International was open to all currents within the labour and socialist movements – understandably, for it to be Marxist would have meant expelling the very people who created it. Within the International, different

<sup>1</sup> Emma Goldman, “The Situation in America”, *Mother Earth*, October 1907.

<sup>2</sup> The best account is Paul Avrich's *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

tendencies could raise their ideas and try to secure wider support.<sup>1</sup>

Initially, the topics discussed at its Congresses reflected the ideas of the French mutualists who had helped found it but within its ranks arose what can only be described as a syndicalist current which stressed the role of trades unions as a means of both resisting and replacing capitalism and the State. When Bakunin joined the International in 1868, he championed these ideas and correctly predicted that electioneering would produce reformism.<sup>2</sup> As he put it:

That the oppression and exploitation of which the toiling masses are victims in all countries, being in their nature and by their present organization internationally solidary, the deliverance of the proletariat must also be so; that the economic and social emancipation (foundation and preliminary condition of political emancipation) of the working-people of a country will be for ever impossible, if it is not effected simultaneously at least in the majority of the countries with which it finds itself bound by means of credit, industry, and commerce; and that, consequently, by the duty of fraternity as well as by enlightened self-interest, in the interest of their own salvation and of their near deliverance, the working-people of all trades are called upon to establish, organize, and exercise the strictest practical solidarity, communal, provincial, national, and international, beginning in their workshop, and then extending it to all their trade-societies and to the federation of all the trades – a solidarity which they ought above all scrupulously to observe and practise in all the developments, in all the catastrophes, and in all the incidents of the incessant struggle of the labor of the workingman against the capital of the bourgeois, such as strikes, demands for decrease of the hours of work and increase

of wages, and, in general, all the claims which relate to the conditions of labor and to the existence, whether material or moral, of the working-people.<sup>3</sup>

Marx himself summarised Bakunin's position (reasonably accurately for once) as the "working class must not occupy itself with *politics*. They must only organise themselves by trades-unions. One fine day, by means of the *Internationale* they will supplant the place of all existing states."<sup>4</sup> Yet this idea was widespread in the organisation and so Bakunin steadily gained influence.

With the Franco-Prussian war meaning that the planned Congress of 1870 could not take place and in the face of rising federalist influence – blamed by Marx on a conspiracy organised by Bakunin – Engels and Marx organised a Conference in London in September 1871. With knowledge of its calling closely guarded and its attendees carefully selected by Marx, it passed a resolution committing the International to "political action" and so – to use Kropotkin's later words – imposed a "disastrous resolution" by which "the forces of the Association, which until then were joined together for an economic-revolutionary struggle – the direct struggle of the workers unions against the capitalism of the bosses – were going to get involved in an electoral, political, and Parliamentary movement, where they could only wither and be destroyed."<sup>5</sup> "Political action" – with Marx stating that in countries like Britain and America workers could achieve socialism by peaceful means – was confirmed at the Hague Congress of 1872 by a majority, again, artificially engineered by Marx (utilising invented mandates, amongst other intrigues) which also expelled Bakunin and James Guillaume as well as moving the General Council of the International to America.

The Hague decisions were rejected by the vast majority of the International at the St. Imier Congress, which also confirmed its commitment to economic struggle, solidarity and organisation.<sup>6</sup> While the rump of the International around Marx

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<sup>1</sup> As such, the Marxist claim that Bakunin sought to "take over" the International is nonsense and can only be explained by an unspoken premise that the International was owned by Marx rather than its members. Bakunin had the same right as any other member to spread his ideas and to communicate and associate with others to ensure that. Marx, after all, wrote many letters to his followers within the International and it is not explained why Bakunin should not have the same right. One is taken as normal, the other denounced as a conspiracy.

<sup>2</sup> Iain McKay, "Another View: Syndicalism, Anarchism and Marxism," *Anarchist Studies* 20: 1 (Spring 2012).

<sup>3</sup> "The Political Theology of Mazzini and the International", *Liberty*, 11 December 1886

<sup>4</sup> Marx, "Marx to Paul Lafargue 19 April 1870", *Collected Works* 43: 490.

<sup>5</sup> *Modern Science and Anarchy* (Chico: AK Press, 2018), 130.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Graham, "The Birth of Revolutionary Anarchism", *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Vol. 2 No. 2 (Summer 2022).

disappeared within a year, the Federalist-wing continued to hold Congresses until 1877 reiterating its positions to end. This can be seen from the resolutions passed at the International's final (ninth) Congress:

*The tendencies in modern production from the point of view of ownership*

Considering that modern mode of production tends, from the point of view of as ownership, towards the accumulation of capital in the hands of a few and increases the exploitation of workers.

That this state of affairs, the source of all social inequalities, must be changed.

Congress considers that the achievement of collective property, that is to say the taking possession of social capital by groups of workers, as a necessity; Congress further declares that a socialist party truly worthy of the name must place the principle of collective property, not in some distant future, but in its current programmes and in its daily activities.

*What should be the attitude of the proletariat towards political parties?*

Considering that the conquest of power is the natural tendency for all political parties and that this power has no other goal than the defence of economic privilege;

Considering, furthermore, that in reality current society is divided, not into political parties, but rather by economic conditions: exploiters and exploited, workers and bosses; wage-workers and capitalists;

Considering, moreover, that the antagonism that exists between the two categories cannot cease by the will of any government or power, but rather by the united efforts of all the exploited against their exploiters;

For these reasons:

Congress declares that it makes no distinction between the various *political* parties, whether they call themselves socialist or not: all these parties, without distinction, form in its eyes one reactionary

mass and it believes it is its duty to fight all of them.

It hopes that workers who still march in the ranks of these various parties, instructed by the lessons of experience and by revolutionary propaganda, will open their eyes and abandon the political path to adopt that of revolutionary socialism.

*On the organisation of trade unions*

The Congress, while recognising the important of trades unions and recommending their formation on an international basis, declares that trades unions that have no other aim than the improvement of workers' situation, either by the reduction of working hours, or by the setting of wage rates, will never achieve the emancipation of the proletariat; and that trades unions must propose, as their principal goal, the abolition of the proletariat, that is to say the abolition of bosses, taking possession of the instruments of labour and the expropriation of their owners.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, by the end of the 1870s, anarchists had been advocating the necessity of organising the class struggle on a non-parliamentarian, economic basis for over ten years and had defined this position in opposition to Marx's urging of "political action" for the labour movement.

### **"The Chicago Idea"**

While organising the various sections of the American left had been attempted in October 1881 at the Chicago Social Revolutionary Congress, lasting success did not occur until the 1883 Pittsburgh Congress and the formation of the IWPA. The organisation drew adherents from many backgrounds, including mutualist anarchists such as Dyer Lum<sup>2</sup> and those – like Albert Parsons and August Spies – who had previously been associated with the various Marxist political parties which had grown out of the International's American sections. The Congress issued a Manifesto which summarised its aims:

First — Destruction of the existing class rule, by all means, i.e., by energetic,

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<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin de la Federation Jurassienne*, 23 September 1877.

<sup>2</sup> Frank H. Brooks, "Ideology, Strategy, and Organization: Dyer Lum and the American Anarchist Movement", *Labor History*, vol. 34, No. 1 (1993).

relentless, revolutionary and international action.

Second — Establishment of a free society based upon cooperative organization of production.

Third — Free exchange of equivalent products by and between the productive organizations without commerce and profit-mongery.

Fourth — Organization of education on a secular, scientific and equal basis for both sexes.

Fifth — Equal rights for all without distinction to sex or race.

Sixth — Regulation of all public affairs by free contracts between autonomous (independent) communes and associations, resting on a federalistic basis.<sup>1</sup>

The IWPA is usually portrayed as having two main tendencies – one based in New York which favoured “propaganda by the deed” and another in Chicago which favoured working within the labour movement. The latter group – including Parsons and Spies – was responsible for this resolution passed at the 1883 Congress:

In consideration that we see in trades-unions advocating progressive principles – the abolishment of the wage-system – the corner-stone of a better and more just system of society than the present; and

In consideration, further, that these trades-unions consist of an army of robbed and disinherited fellow-sufferers, and brothers, called to overthrow the economic establishments of the present time for the purpose of general and free cooperation: Be it, therefore,

*Resolved*, That while we give such progressive trades-unions our fullest sympathy and assure them of every assistance in our power, we are, on the other hand, determined to fight and, if possible, to annihilate every organisation

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***I am an internationalist. My patriotism covers more than the boundary lines of a single state; the world is my country, all mankind my countrymen. That is what the emblem of the red flag signifies; it is the symbol of free, of emancipated labour. The workers are without a country. In all lands they are disinherited, and America is no exception. The wage-slaves are the dependent hirelings of the rich in every land. They are everywhere social pariahs without home or country. As they create all wealth, so also they fight every battle, not for themselves but for their masters. There is an end to this self-degradation. In the future labour will fight only in self-defence and work for itself and not for another.***

– Albert R Parsons  
*The Commonwealth*, 22 October 1887

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given to reactionary principles, as these are the enemies of the emancipation of the workingmen, as well as of humanity and of progress.<sup>2</sup>

Parsons later clarified this motion by noting while “Communist Anarchists or Internationalists... have on some occasions found it necessary to criticise adversely the tactics, propaganda and aims of some Trades unions”, the IWPA “recognises in the Trades Unions the embryonic group of the future ‘free society’. Every Trades Union is, *nolens volens*, an autonomous commune in the process of incubation. The Trades Union is a necessity of capitalistic production, and will yet take its place by superseding it under the system of universal free co-operation”.<sup>3</sup> He also pointed to the Chicago unions IWPA members were active in:

The Central Labor Union seeks to organise all wage-workers, both men and women, into labour unions or groups with delegates to represent them in the central body... organising the vast army of employed and unemployed wage-workers, preparatory to an assault upon the strongholds of capitalism. The Central Labor Union is a revolutionary body which maintains that voluntary concessions by means of arbitration or legislation from the employing class is not to be expected. They

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Albert R. Parsons, “Autobiography of Albert R. Parsons”, *The Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs* (New York: Monad Press, 1977), 42.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Michael J. Schaack, *Anarchy and Anarchists: A History of Red Terror and the Social Revolution in America and Europe* (Chicago: F.J. Schulte & Company, 1889), 72.

<sup>3</sup> “The International”, *The Alarm*, 4 April 1885; Also see: *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2003), 110, 173.



therefore call upon all wage-labourers to organise and enforce their demands for the right to not only live, but live well, by every means in their power.<sup>1</sup>

The “free society would be purely economic in its character, dealing only with the production and distribution of wealth. The various occupations and individuals would voluntarily associate to conduct the processes of distribution and production... regulating all affairs to suit their pleasure. The Trades’ Union, [Knights of Labor] Assemblies and other labour organisations are but the initial groups of the free society.”<sup>2</sup>

“The land for the landless; the tools to the toilers; and the product to the producers,” stated Lucy Parsons, for “without this right to the free use of these things, the pursuit of happiness, the enjoyment of liberty and life itself are hollow mockeries.” She stressed the importance of “the advantages of a free society based upon the voluntary association of cooperative industry”.<sup>3</sup> She also pointed to the future socialist society being built in the current struggle against capitalism:

I claim that a trades union and the Knights of Labor are practical illustrations of the feasibility of Anarchism. These men come together for a common purpose and each one subscribes to certain by-laws or rules. If a member violates those rules the society then and there decides what the penalty shall be.<sup>4</sup>

These ideas reflected those developed by the Federalist-wing of the International, as did the IWPA’s vision of revolution. As well as translating Kropotkin’s “Anarchistic Programme” of Expropriation,<sup>5</sup> *The Alarm* also published an article from *Le Révolté* on the nature of the social revolution:

being victims of the capitalistic system of production which raises a barrier against

our physical and intellectual development, we must take possession of foundries, workshops, factories and mines in order that we may be able to continue to produce what we require on a basis of equality and independently of any authority<sup>6</sup>

Albert Parsons included a similar vision of the social revolution in his book on *Anarchism*<sup>7</sup> and Dyer Lum indicated its widespread acceptance within the IWPA before the Haymarket events:

in common with the writers on the ALARM I believe the destruction of the existing economic system will be through revolutionary action... the means of production will be seized... by what is known as the Commune; that is, a voluntary association of workmen who take the tools and appliances of production into their possession when the legalized incubus is destroyed... trade associations will avail themselves of the existing plant set free from legalized capital.<sup>8</sup>

The final issue of *The Alarm* issued before the Haymarket events contained a summary of Proudhon’s ideas entitled “What is Property?”, explaining “the distinction between property and possession” and that to “discharge the employers”, the “workers will take forcible possession of the Instruments of Labor and work it by themselves and for themselves” while “pay no rent, and the landlords are discharged.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Albert Parsons regularly echoed Proudhon’s position: “The tools by natural right belong to the toilers, the product to the producers, and whoever denies such right is an enemy of all mankind.”<sup>10</sup>

The IWPA, in short, viewed the social revolution as did the Federalist International – namely the seizing (expropriation) of workplaces by workers’ unions who would then run them under self-management.

<sup>1</sup> Albert R. Parsons, “Labor Circles”, *The Alarm* 31 October 1885.

<sup>2</sup> Albert R. Parsons, “What Anarchy Means”, *The Alarm*, 7 March 1885.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Carolyn Ashbaugh, *Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary* (Chicago: Charles H Kerr, 1976), 53.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Ashbaugh, 173.

<sup>5</sup> “Expropriation”, *The Alarm*, 20 March 1886.

<sup>6</sup> “The Social Revolution”, *The Alarm*, 6 December 1884; Abridged from “La Propagande et la Révolution”, *Le Révolté*, 13 October 1883.

<sup>7</sup> “The Social Revolution”, *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis*, 166.

<sup>8</sup> Lum, “Is the Commune a Finality?”, *The Alarm*, 6 March 1886. This vision of the Commune echoes Kropotkin’s discussion in his article “La Commune” (*Le Révolté*, 1 and 15 May 1880) which was later included in *Words of a Rebel*.

<sup>9</sup> Federic Tuffard, “What is Property?”, *The Alarm*, 24 April 1886.

<sup>10</sup> Albert R. Parsons, “An Open Letter”, *The Alarm*, 24 April 1886.

This recognition of the importance of the labour movement for anarchist activity and social revolution was combined with dynamite-bluster and certain distance from fighting for reforms. Thus the Chicago IWPA initially rejected the eight-hour movement by arguing that working hours cannot be permanently controlled by workers unless they expropriate capital:

There is but one way and only one to control the hours of labor, to-wit: *The laborer must control the means of labor – Capital!* The chance to labor and to live will then be no longer a favor granted, but a RIGHT-EXERCISED.<sup>1</sup>

While correct, such a position failed to appreciate that such struggles build the strength of the labour movement and while reforms are always subject to attempts to undermine them – so requiring the abolition of capital to fully secure them – they can last for long periods of time and their defence can likewise build workers' power. Faced with a rising mass movement for the eight-hour day, most in the Chicago IWPA recognised this and joined it – and their presence in the mass revolt was precisely what scared the ruling class (the eight-hour movement reminding them of the 1877 revolt<sup>2</sup>) and which resulted in the juridical murders of November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1887.

This labour orientated approach in Chicago was combined with bomb-talk and violent rhetoric. While John Most was most associated with it, it cannot be denied that the Chicago anarchists indulged in it even if some of those who denounce this talk do so hypocritically if they support capitalism and its actual violence.<sup>3</sup> Much of this talk was defensive in nature – dynamite being glorified as an equaliser against the regular violent

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***That is what the socialists propose. Some say it is un-American! Well, then, is it American to let people starve and die in ignorance? Is exploitation and robbery of the poor, American?***

– Michael Schwab

***Anarchists say that there should be no class interests, but that every human being should have free access to the means of existence and that the pantries of mother-earth should be accessible to all of her children. One part of the great human family has no right to deprive their brothers and sisters of their legitimate place at the common table***

– Adolph Fischer

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repression of strikes and protests by the State<sup>4</sup> – this did not stop such articles being seized upon by the State during the trial. However, this talk while often declared as “anarchist” as it expressed “propaganda by the deed” was alien to the ideas of revolutionary anarchism which had developed in the International and were reflected in “the Chicago Idea”.<sup>5</sup>

### **Anarchists, Socialists, Marxists?**

Samuel Yellen authored an early attempt to portray the Chicago anarchists as something other than anarchist in 1936 when he proclaimed that John Most was a “disciple of Bakunin” and while in theory he “was not a pure anarchist... in practice advocated the anarchist tactics of terroristic action against Church and State by the individual on his own initiative.” Within the IWPA the Eastern city groups, “led by Most, favoured the individualistic tactics of anarchism” while Chicago and the Western cities “held for a mixture of anarchism and

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<sup>1</sup> Albert R. Parsons, “Eight Hours”, *The Alarm*, 8 August 1885.

<sup>2</sup> See the articles by Reclus and Kropotkin included in “Anarchism and the General Strike”, *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Vol. 3 No. 1 (Spring 2023).

<sup>3</sup> “The employers never tire of warning the strikers against using violence, but themselves never hesitate to employ violence in order to subdue the strikers when necessary. According to the ‘law’ there is no violence employed when employers starve the workman into subjection, but it is ‘unlawful and disorderly’ for the workers to resist this starvation process known as the lock-out, the discharge, etc.” (Albert R. Parsons, “The Police”, *The Alarm*, 22 August 1885).

<sup>4</sup> “The Anarchists are denounced for advising the use of force. We print below the expressions of the capitalists, made in connection with the ‘great strike’ of 1877. Our readers can judge for themselves who it is that not only advocate but employ force for the purpose of keeping the working people in subjection” (“Masters and Slaves”, *The Alarm*, 1 November 1884).

<sup>5</sup> These positions are not mutually exclusive as shown by Louis Lingg, a supporter of propaganda by the deed, who was also a union activist and organiser. (“Autobiography of Louis Lingg”, *The Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs*, 174, 176-7).



syndicalism” which “actually approached syndicalism closer than it did anarchism.”<sup>1</sup> This is echoed by Carolyn Ashbaugh in her flawed biography of Lucy Parsons who takes it further by denying they were anarchists at all, proclaiming them “syndicalists” only.<sup>2</sup>

There is little to say about this nonsense other than that Yellen seemed as unaware of Bakunin’s syndicalism as the awkward fact he never advocated individual terror. Likewise, does the fact that Kropotkin and Malatesta also opposed these “anarchist tactics” and argued that anarchists had to encourage strong workers’ organisations mean that they, too, were not anarchist? Even the Bolshevik historian G.M. Stekloff acknowledged that the “Bakuninists may be looked upon as having been, to a considerable extent, the fathers of revolutionary syndicalism” and admitted resolutions passed at the Verviers Congress of 1877 “formulated the idea of replacing the socialist parties by the trade unions – an idea which is typical of the contemporary ‘revolutionary syndicalist’ movement”.<sup>3</sup>

It is more accurate to state that Most’s position was the *rejection* of anarchism – for “Most did not espouse unionism as a proper anarchist tactic” while “[d]ynamite terrorism has no basis in any anarchist theory or tradition; its appeal sprang directly from the spectacular assassination of Czar Alexander II” in 1881.<sup>4</sup> Space, however, excludes discussion of “propaganda by the deed” beyond noting that it initially referred to such activities as going ahead with demonstrations which the authorities had banned and attempts at provoking popular insurrections.<sup>5</sup> Assassination was “*not* an act of propaganda by the deed” which was based on “the need for *collective* action which, contrary to a widespread impression, characterized [its] formulation”. Assassinations “reflected a ‘Republican’ rather than a socialist outlook and in addition risked misrepresentation which could destroy any value they may carry.”<sup>6</sup> Suffice to say, this is not how it is viewed by historians who tend

to project notions derived from future events back to the early 1880s, if not even earlier.

The problem is fundamentally down to ignorance of anarchism. Usually, historians fail to define what anarchism is and so fail to clearly indicate why the IWPA does not meet that definition. Similarly with “socialism” and “anarchism”, the assumption being that the two are fundamentally different but that does not reflect their use at the time nor the actual origins of anarchism as a school of socialism. As Malatesta suggested in the 1890s as regards Italian Marxists:

*Avanti!* has probably succumbed to an illusion.

If it really believes what it has said time and time again about anarchism – that anarchism is the very opposite of socialism – and if it carries on sitting in judgment of us on the basis of the misrepresentations and calumnies with which the German marxists, aping the example set by Marx in his dealings with Bakunin, disgraced themselves, then the fact is that, every time it may deign to read something we have written or listen to one of our speeches, it will be pleasantly surprised to discover an “evolution” in anarchism pointing in the direction of socialism, which it seems is almost synonymous with Marxism as far as *Avanti!* is concerned.

But anyone with even a superficial grasp of our ideas and history knows that, since its inception, anarchism has been merely the outworking and integration of the socialist idea and thus could not and cannot evolve *towards* socialism, which is to say towards itself.<sup>7</sup>

This is applicable to the Chicago Martyrs with a British Marxist reviewer of Parsons’ book *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis* writing “there is little in the book with which

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Yellen, *American Labor Struggles, 1877-1934* (New York: Pathfinder, 1974), 46.

<sup>2</sup> Iain McKay, “Lucy Parsons: American Anarchist”, *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Vol. 2 No. 1 (Spring 2022).

<sup>3</sup> G. M. Stekloff, *History of the First International* (London: Martin Lawrence, 1928), 308, 338.

<sup>4</sup> Tom Goyens, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880-1914* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 119, 76.

<sup>5</sup> Kropotkin opposed “propaganda by the deed” in all its forms, contrasting the need for anarchists to work amongst

the masses to enflame “the spirit of revolt” – see the Introduction to *Words of a Rebel* (Oakland: PM Press, 2022).

<sup>6</sup> David Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism: a study of the political activities of Paul Brousse within the First International and the French socialist movement, 1870-90* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), 123.

<sup>7</sup> *Complete Works of Malatesta* (Chico: AK Press, 2016) III: 333.

Social-Democrats could not cordially agree, and we imagine that the Anarchism there defined has little in common with the Anarchism of the Bakunin school or with that professed by most avowed Anarchists today.” Anarchy, he asserted, being “that gospel of destruction according to Bakunin” and “a genuine Anarchist is not a Socialist at all, is on the contrary a most extreme individualist.”<sup>1</sup> Thus the reviewer knew what anarchism was far better than Parsons and, presumably, Kropotkin and Reclus. The arrogance – and ignorance – is staggering but, as we will see, it is not an isolated case.

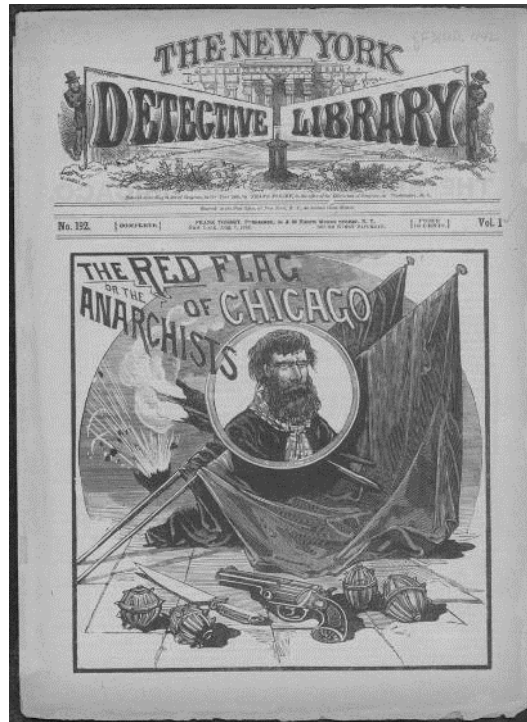
Neither the use of socialist nor communist by members of the IWPA imply acceptance of Marxism as neither are monopolised by it – although its adherents have tried their best to do so. While it may make some sense (if only to reduce the word count!) to talk of Anarchists and Socialists rather than Anarchist-Socialists and State-Socialists, it should not mean forgetting that anarchists are socialists and aim to end capitalism along with the State.

Likewise with their use of the Red Flag.<sup>2</sup> Other anarchists raised it at the time and Proudhon and Bakunin associated themselves with it as it was the socialist symbol.<sup>3</sup> As did Kropotkin:

History shows us that the Anarchists have now remained the sole bearers of the Socialist ideal which inspired the great movement of the International twenty years ago. All parties have deserted the red flag, in proportion as they felt themselves nearer to power. This red flag — the hope of the toiling and suffering masses — is now our inheritance. Let us keep it firm, unstained;

and let us live for it and, if necessary, die for it as our brethren of Chicago did.<sup>4</sup>

So this article would be much shorter if certain writers on the IWPA had read Kropotkin’s statement that Anarchy was “the no-government system of socialism” and “most of the anarchists arrive at its ultimate conclusion, that is, at a complete negation of the wage-system and at communism.” Before Marx, Proudhon had utilised the labour theory of value to create a critique of capital which argued the wage-labour ensured that workers were exploited. Even those anarchists who rejected that labour theory of value – like Kropotkin – did not doubt that capitalism resulted in a society which ensured the worker “agrees to sell his labour for a sum inferior to its real value.” Like Proudhon, he stressed the need for workers’ control: “The worker claims his share in the riches he produces; he claims his share in the management of production”<sup>5</sup> Given that Albert Parsons included this article in his book



*Anarchism*, there is no excuse for this apparent ignorance.

It should also be noted that anarchists in Europe recognised the IWPA as comrades. *Le Révolté* reported that “an anarchist newspaper has appeared in Chicago: *The Alarm*” and an IWPA demonstration’s “banners... carried mottos whose anarchic meaning is sufficiently clear and which we would do well to meditate on”. It also quoted “comrade Parsons” as follows: “Get Organised, learn to defend yourself. Attack! This exploitative system must perish and the worker must become the master of his work.”<sup>6</sup> This appreciation was reciprocated with *The Alarm* publishing articles from *Le Révolté* and reporting on leading

<sup>1</sup> H. Quelch, “A Voice from the Grave”, *Justice*, 11 February 1888.

<sup>2</sup> Anarchist use of the Black Flag started in 1883 in France and while its use spread it did not displace the Red Flag for decades. Significantly, the Chicago IWPA raised the Black Flag alongside the Red in 1884. See the Appendix on “The Symbols of Anarchy” in *An Anarchist FAQ*.

<sup>3</sup> Bakunin, *God and the State* (New York: Dover, 1970) 47; Proudhon, *Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011), 257-8.

<sup>4</sup> “Commemoration of the Chicago Martyrs”, *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism*, December 1892.

<sup>5</sup> “The Scientific Basis of Anarchy”, *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis*, 111, 121, 113.

<sup>6</sup> *Le Révolté*, 4 January 1885; 16 August 1885.

anarchists like Kropotkin and Louise Michel (“Our comrades” who “taught Socialism”<sup>1</sup>).

*Was the IWPA “Revolutionary Socialist”  
rather than Anarchist?*

Historian Bruce C. Nelson proclaims that “[i]f European anarchist is identified with Proudhon and Kropotkin” and “immigrant anarchism with Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, then the membership of Chicago’s IWPA was not anarchist” and adds that “Bakunin never slept in Chicago.” He, rightly, states that the IWPA’s politics “should not be approached with twentieth-century labels”.<sup>2</sup>

Yet Nelson concludes that rather than being anarchists, the Internationalists were “Political Republicans,” “Economic Socialists,” “Social-Revolutionaries,” “Atheists and Freethinkers.” This meant that this “was not an evolution from socialism to anarchism but from republicanism, through electoral socialism, to revolutionary socialism.” He is somewhat confused in his claims, also noting “Republican images pervaded socialist and anarchist rhetoric” and that “[i]f the Martyrs moved ideologically from socialism to anarchism, the active membership seems to have moved from republicanism, through parliamentary socialism, to revolutionary socialism.” In short: “If ‘the Chicago Idea’ seems to anticipate anarcho-syndicalism or anarcho-communism, it can be better understood on and in its own terms, which were socialist, not anarchist.”<sup>3</sup>

While Nelson is right to suggest that current notions should not be projected backwards, he seems to forget that anarchism, communism, socialism and anarchist-communism were nineteenth century “labels” familiar to the members of the IWPA. For example:

Anarchist-Communists seek the destruction of the capitalistic system of private property in capital. The capitalist is a robber and slave driver, but capital is a necessity without the use of which mankind cannot live. By the word capital is meant the

resources of life and all the means of existence... Capital is the product of the combined labour of all, and is by natural law the inheritance of all, for the free use of all.<sup>4</sup>

While Nelson is not, as far as can be seen, a Marxist, his arguments reflect an all-too-common Marxist narrative that anarchism and socialism are different things – something which Marxists in the 1880s were keen to proclaim but which anarchists at the time (as later) rejected as ignorant, sectarian nonsense. To quote one Marxist debater with Lucy Parsons:

Socialism means one thing and anarchy another... Mrs. Parsons spoke in this hall last Wednesday night, and she used the word socialist every time she should have used the word anarchist. Mrs. Parsons has no right to call herself a socialist. She is an anarchist and has avowed herself as such... I want you anarchists to understand that you will not be allowed to parade yourselves as socialists.<sup>5</sup>

Nelson makes a distinction between “socialism” and “anarchism” which only appear valid given twentieth century assumptions. As such, to note that “the movement consistently preferred the adjective ‘socialist’” and that *The Alarm* and other IWPA papers referred to themselves in their masthead and elsewhere as “socialist” newspapers is not the significant fact he thinks it is.<sup>6</sup> After all, *Le Révolté* had from its launch on 22 February 1879 until its issue of 2 March 1884 “socialist organ” in its masthead before, for two issues, using “anarchist organ” and after that “communist-anarchist organ”.

In terms of “republicanism,” Proudhon considered himself as part of the French republican tradition – although a member deeply critical of its mainstream which was centralised, unitarian and Jacobin. Thus we find him arguing that monopoly “must republicanise itself or be destroyed”, advocating an “industrial republic” where

<sup>1</sup> *The Alarm*, 23 January 1886.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce C. Nelson, *Beyond the martyrs: a social history of Chicago’s anarchists, 1870-1900* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 153, 171, 153. It would be churlish to note that Marx likewise never slept in Chicago – nor in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Peking, Havana, etc. – but that did not stop his ideas being advocated there. Unlike Marx, at least Bakunin set foot upon the Continent after he escaped from Siberia while Kropotkin did visit the city, visiting the graves of the Martyrs at Waldheim Cemetery, meeting anarchists

and lecturing on anarchism. After he left, Lucy Parsons attended a symposium on the effect of his visit. (Paul Avrich, “Kropotkin in America”, *Anarchist Portraits* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988], 99-102)

<sup>3</sup> Nelson, 171, 173, 241.

<sup>4</sup> Albert R. Parsons. “Confused Brains”, *The Alarm*, 5 September 1885.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Ashbaugh, 171.

<sup>6</sup> Nelson, 154-5.

“democratically organised workers’ associations” would be part of the “vast federation” which made up “the democratic and social Republic.” Thus a suitably modified “Republic is a positive anarchy”<sup>1</sup>

Bakunin, likewise, “acknowledge[d] no political form other than the republican form”<sup>2</sup> and that “States must be abolished, for their only mission is to protect individual property, that is, to protect the exploitation by some privileged minority, of the collective labor of the mass of the people; for in that very way they prevent the development of the worldwide economic republic.”<sup>3</sup> As he summarised:

If socialism disputes radicalism, this is hardly in order to reverse it but rather to advance it. Socialism criticizes radicalism not for being what it is but, on the contrary, for not being enough so, for having stopped in midstream and thus having put itself in contradiction with the revolutionary principle, which we share with it. Revolutionary radicalism proclaimed the Rights of Man, for example, human rights. This will be its everlasting honor, but it dishonors itself today by resisting the great economic revolution without which every right is but an empty phrase and a trick. Revolutionary socialism, a legitimate child of radicalism, scorns its father’s hesitations, accuses it of inconsistency and cowardice, and goes further<sup>4</sup>

There is the “Republic-State” and there is “the system of the Republic-Commune, the Republic-Federation, i.e. the system of *Anarchism*. This is the politics of the Social Revolution, which aims at the abolition of the *State* and establishment of the economic, entirely free organisation of the people – organisation from bottom to top by means of federation.”<sup>5</sup>

Proudhon and Bakunin moved from republicanism to socialism and a rejection of electoral politics. Neither aimed to abolish the idea of “one-person, one-vote” within their preferred federal socio-

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***If anarchy were the thing the state’s attorney makes it out to be, how could it be that such eminent scholars as Prince Kropotkin, and the greatest living geographer, Élisée Reclus, were avowed anarchists, even editors of anarchistic papers?***

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– Michael Schwab

economic self-organisation. The process Nelson recounts mirrors this. Anarchism did not just pop into being, it evolved and we should not be surprised that it did so in different periods with similar environments and experiences – particularly when the latter evolution clearly knows of, and is informed by, the earlier one.

What of “Economic Socialists”? If by this it is meant State ownership and control of the economy, then anarchism is not socialist – and neither was the IWPA: “We do not believe in State Socialism. We are Socialists, pure and simple, where all titles are simple possessions”<sup>6</sup>. As Adolph Fischer noted:

A number of persons claim that an anarchist cannot be a socialist, and a socialist not an anarchist. This is wrong... every anarchist is a socialist, but every socialist is not necessarily an anarchist... Politically we are anarchists, and economically, communists or socialists.<sup>7</sup>

In terms of the non-anarchist socialists, he clearly understood the difference between them and anarchists:

In what respect do the social-democrats differ from the anarchists? The state socialists do not seek the abolition of the state, but they advocate the centralization of the means of production in the hands of the government, in other words, they want the government to be the controller of industry. Now, a socialist who is not a state-socialist must necessarily be an anarchist. It is utterly ridiculous of men like Dr. Aveling to state that they are neither state-socialists nor

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<sup>1</sup> Proudhon, *Property is Theft!*, 255, 610, 377-8, 280.

<sup>2</sup> Bakunin, *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), 174

<sup>3</sup> Bakunin, *The Basic Bakunin* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1994), 196.

<sup>4</sup> Bakunin, 87.

<sup>5</sup> Bakunin, *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (New York: The Free Press, 1953), 314.

<sup>6</sup> “State Socialism”, *The Alarm*, 22 November 1884.

<sup>7</sup> Adolph Fischer, “Autobiography of Adolph Fischer”, *The Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs*, 80-1.

anarchists. Dr. Aveling has to be either one or the other.<sup>1</sup>

The anarchists in contrast “have proven that the existing form of society is based upon the exploitation of one class by another; in plain words, upon legalized robbery. They say that few persons have no right whatever, to monopolize the resources of nature; and they urge the victims, the toilers, to take possession of the means of production, which belong to the people in common, and thus secure the full benefit of their toil.”<sup>2</sup> So while rejecting state socialism, the IWPA embraced an anti-authoritarian, associationist socialism based on common ownership of the means of production – as had Bakunin and Kropotkin.<sup>3</sup>

In short, Nelson – despite his own warnings – is projecting back to the 1880s the twentieth century distancing of anarchism from “socialism” (i.e., social democracy and the Stalinist regimes) by many anarchists or taking at face-value Marxists attempts to excommunicate anarchism from socialism. Yet the latter has always been challenged by anarchists. Here is Emma Goldman stating the obvious:

While it is true that I am an Anarchist. I am also a Socialist. All Anarchists are Socialists, but not all Socialists are Anarchists. Anarchism is the higher form of

Socialism. All Socialists who think and grow will be forced to the Anarchist conclusion. Anarchism is the inevitable goal of Socialism. We Anarchists believe in the socialisation of wealth and of land and of the means of production. But the doing away with capitalism is not a cure-all, and the substitution of the Socialistic state only means greater concentration and increase of governmental power. We believe in the revolution. The founders of Socialism believed in it. Karl Marx believed in it. All thinking Socialists of today believe in it. The political Socialists are only trimmers and they are no different from other politicians. In their mad effort to get offices they deny their birthright for a

mess of pottage and sacrifice their true principles and real convictions on the polluted altar of politics.<sup>4</sup>

While Nelson seeks to distance the IWPA from Goldman and Berkman, they themselves repeatedly indicated that they followed its ideas. Indeed, both were members of the Pioneers of Liberty, the first Jewish anarchist group in America, which “affiliated itself with the International Working People’s Association”.<sup>5</sup> Both became anarchists as a direct result of the Haymarket events. Berkman recalled that he “became an Anarchist and decided

<sup>1</sup> Fischer, 81. Aveling had declared himself “not an advocate of State Socialism” in Boston when asked a question by Benjamin Tucker, who likewise considered this reply as “absurd” given what Aveling had argued at the meeting and dismissed him as a “charlatan” who “is too ignorant regarding Anarchism to warrant him in publicly discussing it”. (*Liberty*, 30 October 1886).

<sup>2</sup> Fischer, 83.

<sup>3</sup> In terms of individualist and communist anarchism, it should be noted that Tucker called himself a socialist for he aimed at a non-exploitative economic system in which the workers would secure the product of their labour. The disagreement between social and individualist anarchists rests on how this ending of exploitation can occur. Ironically, the IWPA was closer to Proudhon’s ideas than his erstwhile

American followers in spite of Fischer suggesting that the “Proudhon anarchists, however, although being opposed to the state and political authority, do not advocate the co-operative system of production, and the common ownership of the means of production, the products and the land.” (Fischer, 8) In reality, Proudhon – if not Tucker – did advocate co-operatives based on common ownership albeit one based on market exchange of the products. See: Iain McKay, “Proudhon, Property and Possession,” *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 66 (Winter 2016).

<sup>4</sup> “Anarchists Socialists” *The Agitator*, 1 April 1911.

<sup>5</sup> Paul and Karen Avrich, *Sasha and Emma: The Anarchist Odyssey of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 25.

to devote my life and energy to the cause of the Chicago Martyrs.”<sup>1</sup> Likewise Goldman:

I began to read *Die Freiheit* regularly. I sent for the literature advertised in the paper and I devoured every line on anarchism I could get, every word about the men, their lives, their work. I read about their heroic stand while on trial and their marvellous defence. I saw a new world opening before me.<sup>2</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Goldman recognised “that in this country five men had to pay with their lives because they advocated Syndicalist methods as the most effective, in the struggle of labor against capital”. She rightly traced syndicalism back to the International and “the split in the revolutionary movement of that day, and its division into two factions: the one, under Marx and Engels, aiming at political conquest; the other, under Bakunin and the Latin workers, forging ahead along industrial [unionist] and Syndicalist lines”. Thus: “Syndicalism is, in essence, the economic expression of Anarchism”.<sup>3</sup>

Nelson also notes that Albert Parson’s book included extracts from Marx’s economic analysis along with anarchists like Kropotkin.<sup>4</sup> This means little, given that Bakunin recognised the importance of *Capital* and its analysis. If agreeing with the idea that capital exploits workers by appropriating the surplus-value of labour then Bakunin – and Kropotkin, etc. – were all “Marxists.” Indeed, this analysis predates *Capital* for Proudhon expounded a similar analysis twenty-years before – as did the so-called British “Ricardian Socialists” before him.

Unfortunately, it is left for the reader to work out what is meant by anarchism, for the politics of Bakunin and Kropotkin are not actually defined. Both rejected “political action” in favour of reforms and revolution by direct struggle by labour organisations – which is precisely “the Chicago Idea.” So the IWPA was indeed revolutionary socialist but that was *because* it was anarchist.

*Was the IWPA Marxist rather than Anarchist?*

The claim that the Chicago IWPA was Marxist rather than Anarchist has been made by historian James Green and Leninist Paul Le Blanc. Both rest on weak evidence and an apparent ignorance of both Anarchism and Marxism.

First, we must note that the fact that many members of the IWPA came from Marxist parties adds a certain difficulty. As would be expected, individuals developed towards anarchism faster and further than others, as well as being varied in terms of how much they retained and rejected of their Marxism both in theory and in terminology. Also, there is significant overlap in Marxism and Anarchism as both are socialist schools. Both share an analysis of capitalism as exploitative due to wage-labour and an analysis of the State as an instrument of class rule. Someone who mistakenly thinks that anarchism is just opposed to the State would find “Marxist” influences in writings which simply reflect anarchist perspectives. The important differences between the two schools of socialism are current tactics and revolutionary strategy – anarchists reject electioneering and the transitional State of Marxism in favour of building federated workers’ councils or unions to both fight and replace capital and its State.<sup>5</sup>

Green raised the notion that the Chicago IWPA were Marxists in his book *Death in the Haymarket*.<sup>6</sup> This is a somewhat confused work when it comes to explaining the ideas of the IWPA and, indeed, those of Marx, Bakunin and others.

He starts by stating that in the 1870s “the German socialists in the [Socialist] party turned away from electoral competition and adopted Karl Marx’s strategy of organising workers” of “building class-conscious trade unions as a basis for future political action.”<sup>7</sup> The idea that there was a division in the ranks of American socialists in the 1870s between “Lasselleans” who favoured immediately standing in elections and “Marxists” who favoured union activity first is commonplace. One Marxist historian comments upon “the basic Marxist

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Paul and Karen Avrich, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Emma Goldman. *Living My Life* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970) I: 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> “Syndicalism: The Modern Menace to Capitalism”, *Red Emma Speaks* (New York: Humanity Books, 1998), 87, 88, 91.

<sup>4</sup> Nelson, 161.

<sup>5</sup> Anarchist opposition to State socialism is based on the awareness that the State has evolved certain characteristics to dispossess the masses to secure minority class rule and to

keep those structures would continue this dispossession of the masses, creating rule by a new minority class. It has nothing to do with failing to acknowledge a revolution needs defending, that the legacy of class society will take time to transform or that these and other activities require co-ordinated (federated) social organisations.

<sup>6</sup> James Green, *Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement and the Bombing That Divided Gilded Age America* (Anchor Books, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Green, 50.

approach to the labor movement” related by Marx's “letters to his followers” in America: “the creation of effective trade unions capable of conducting economic struggles had to precede the achievement of political power by the working class.”<sup>1</sup> One letter is referenced which simply states in general terms Marx’s view that a political party of labour arises from previous economic struggles and organisation rather than giving specific instructions. In relation to “Marxists” fighting the “Lassalleans” in the 1870s over working in the unions, it is claimed that Friedrich A. Sorge was “in constant correspondence with Marx and Engels”<sup>2</sup> yet only three letters are referenced, of which two date from 1880 and 1883 (and do not argue this anyway) while the third dates from 1865 and does not mention unions.

If the “Marxists” in America were arguing to build unions before pursuing political action then it was not due to instructions from Marx and Engels. Given that Marx had imposed the need for “political action” onto the International before moving the General Council to America, it would appear that the “Lasselleans” were the ones following his publicly stated policy – particularly as he had indicated that America was one of the countries where workers could use the ballot-box to achieve socialism. Unsurprisingly, then, the socialists associated with the International in America formed a political party and this did stand in elections in the 1870s.<sup>3</sup> They *may* have conducted union work alongside this political action but the notion that they forsook “political action” in the 1870s is simply not true – and, moreover, this was completely consistent with Marx’s actual strategy. It was the disillusionment

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<sup>1</sup> Philip S. Foner, *The Workingmen's Party of the United States: A History of the First Marxist Party in the Americas* (Minneapolis: MEP Publications, 1984), 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> Foner, 20.

<sup>3</sup> So keen to make the Chicago IWPA Marxists, Green misreads his reference. The American International existed for four years before he claimed it was “formed” in “the spring of 1874” and while it did change its name at this time to the International Working People’s Association, this was not the same organisation that was created in 1883. In fact, it dissolved itself into the Workingmen’s Party of the United States in the summer of 1876 which in turn became the

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***There are two distinct phases of socialism in the labor movement throughout the world today. One is known as anarchism, without political government or authority, the other is known as state socialism or paternalism, or governmental control of everything. The state socialist seeks to ameliorate and emancipate the wage laborers by means of law, by legislative enactments. The state socialist demand the right to choose their own rulers. Anarchists would have neither rulers nor law-makers of any kind. The anarchists seek the same ends by the abrogation of law, by the abolition of all government***

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– Albert R. Parsons

with this by these Marxists which lead them to anarchism.

Green then moves onto anarchism and this also leaves much to be desired. He seems unaware that the International had not been “dissolved” by Marx but had continued until 1877 by the efforts of “the anarchist followers of Mikhail Bakunin” Marx “feared” would capture it in 1872.<sup>4</sup> He tries to contextualise the IWPA within European developments by stating the anarchists attending the 1881 Conference in London had the “belief that socialist propaganda could not effectively reach workers through trade unions and political parties; nor would revolutionary change result from strikes, mass demonstrations and election campaigns”. A “new method” was needed, “propaganda by deed... an *attentat*, a violent act planned by a secret conspiracy and committed by a dedicated militant, could... arouse the masses and trigger a popular insurrection”.<sup>5</sup> In reality, as discussed elsewhere, this is simply wrong. The London Congress was not a purely anarchist affair and many of the delegates (including Kropotkin) did think socialists had to be involved in trade unions because strikes

Socialistic Labor Party in 1877. Both parties stood in elections. (Bruce, 53-7).

<sup>4</sup> Marx, in fact, moved the General Council to New York in 1872 and its 1873 Congress in Geneva was a “fiasco” (to use Marx’s word). It then lingered on until 1876 when a meeting in America made its non-existence official. “Nearly all the federations of the old International rallied to” the Federalist International. (Stekloff, 278, 266) That one person could “dissolve” a democratic association raises no questions for Green nor does he mention the Federalist International which shows that this did *not* happen.

<sup>5</sup> Green, 92, 93.



and demonstrations could and did produce revolutionary situations.<sup>1</sup>

Most rather than Kropotkin is Green's preferred anarchist as he fits the image better (in spite numerous historians noting by Most's anarchism became consistent only after 1886<sup>2</sup>). This ignorance of anarchism is also shown when he suggests that the Chicago militants "did not fully embrace [Most's] view that individual acts of violence would provoke a revolution: Indeed, they faithfully adhered to the lesson they had learned from Karl Marx: that socialism could be achieved only through the collective power of workers organised into aggressive trade unions".<sup>3</sup> Except, of course, Marx advocated no such thing. Yes, Marx supported unions, but he did not think the workers movements should be limited to these. Rather, he argued for the creation of workers' parties and "political action" in the shape of standing for elections. Indeed, he explicitly mocked Bakunin for advocating the ideas Green proclaims as Marx's.

Green shows a shocking lack of understanding of anarchism and Marxism by suggesting that if the IWPA "continued to label their publications socialist in 1885" it was "because they adhered to Marx's belief that capitalism would be destroyed by its own contradictions and by the inevitable emergence of a class-conscious movement of workers prepared to abolish private property along with the forms of government that sanctioned and protected it."<sup>4</sup> In reality, they continued to label their journals socialist because anarchism is a school of socialism. Unfamiliarity with anarchism is also shown when Green considers Albert Parsons' explanation that "the Chicago socialists initially accepted the anarchist label in defiance of their enemies who branded them with the name"<sup>5</sup> as "bizarre" yet Parsons was repeating Kropotkin's arguments which had been translated in *The Alarm*.<sup>6</sup>

Looking at *The Alarm*, it becomes clear that the members of the IWPA did more than "salted their speeches and pamphlets" with "mottoes... from the writings of Proudhon, who believed property was theft; and from the anarchist pronouncements of Mikhail Bakunin and Johann Most."<sup>7</sup> It published articles on anarchism by its members, translated works by leading anarchists like Kropotkin and Reclus and from European anarchist papers as well as reporting on the international anarchist movement. It was clearly an anarchist journal.

Green admits that they "had given up hope of finding a peaceful path to socialism via elections and legislative changes, that they had broken decisively with their former comrades in the Socialistic Labor Party"<sup>8</sup> (SLP) but fails to also admit this meant rejecting Marx in favour of Bakunin. Likewise, if "the city's revolutionaries remained convinced by Marx and Engels that the road to socialism was a long one and that there were no shortcuts through individual acts of terror"<sup>9</sup> then they shared this perspective with Bakunin, Kropotkin and other anarchists.

As such, there really is no need to invoke Marx and Engels for positions which they either shared with anarchists or explicitly rejected. Ironically, Green does get close to the facts at one point:

The Chicago militants thought of themselves as socialists of the anarchist type – that is, as revolutionaries who believed in liberating society from all state control, whether capitalist or socialist. Anarchists proclaimed that true freedom in a socialist society could be gained in self-governing communities and workplaces where working people determined their rights and responsibilities democratically, without the domination of a powerful national state with its judges and laws, its police forces and armies.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Iain McKay, "The London Congress of 1881", *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Vol. 3 No. 1 (Spring 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Goyens, 126; Max Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism* (London: Freedom Press, 1996), 214; Henry David, *The history of the Haymarket affair: a study in the American social-revolutionary and labor movements* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), 109, 103. Space excludes further discussion beyond noting that while his critique of capitalism and vision of a free society were anarchist, his tactics at this time (replacing labour union activism with individual terror) and vision of social revolution (rule by revolutionary committees which would massacre opponents) were not. He

only became consistently anarchist towards the end of the 1880s

<sup>3</sup> Green, 129-130.

<sup>4</sup> Green, 128-9.

<sup>5</sup> Green, 131.

<sup>6</sup> "L'Ordre", *Le Révolté*, 1 October 1881 (later included in *Words of a Rebel*); "Order and Anarchy: A Statement of the Principles of Capitalism and Anarchism", *The Alarm*, 13 December 1884.

<sup>7</sup> Green, 130-1.

<sup>8</sup> Green, 128.

<sup>9</sup> Green, 96.

<sup>10</sup> Green, 129.

It is one thing to note that they were anarchists who had been Marxists and remained influenced by Marx, another to claim that they were still Marxists after they had embraced anarchist positions.

We now turn to Leninist Paul Le Blanc who is far more assertive than Green on the Marxism of the Chicago Anarchists.<sup>1</sup> He bases this on four main claims which will be discussed in turn.

1) “one leading member of the Chicago IWPA later recalled: ‘One time the Pittsburgh program with which many were unsatisfied was discussed. Spies explained: “The Pittsburgh program is secondary, our program is the *Communist Manifesto!*” Spies had Parsons, Gorsuch and other Americans around him in the office of the Arbeiter-Zeitung on whom he impressed the basic teachings of the booklet.’”

His source does not specify when this discussion took place. As noted, many in the IWPA were originally Marxists and the progression towards anarchism undoubtedly varied from individual to individual. It is therefore possible that Spies uttered these words and afterwards came to reject the programme of the *Communist Manifesto*. Recall that this programme was “rais[ing] the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy and “wrest[ing], by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State”<sup>2</sup>, positions which were regularly rejected in *The Alarm* and other publications. Indeed, Spies himself gave a speech in early 1886 – quoting Proudhon, Bakunin and Reclus – rejecting political action and arguing that the State would inevitably create a privileged hierarchy.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paul Le Blanc, *Left Americana: The Radical Heart of US History* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Marx and Engels, “The Manifesto of the Communist Party”, *Collected Works* 6:504

So this claim fails to recognise the changing views within the IWPA and so is, somewhat ironically for a Marxist, undialectical.

2) “Parsons himself argued ‘the IWPA was not founded by Bakunin.’ He traced its ancestry back to... the First International, headed by Marx... adding ‘The distinctive feature of the manifesto of the Pittsburgh Labor Congress, was opposition to

centralized power, abolition of authoritative, compulsory or force government in any form... The IWPA is *not* in opposition to Marx... The first publication ever issued by the IWPA was written by Marx and Engels’ – the *Communist Manifesto*”<sup>4</sup>

This claim is based on a misreading of a letter by Parsons<sup>5</sup> made by Carolyn Ashbaugh.

Reading the actual letter, it becomes clear that Parsons was addressing various inaccuracies in a book review published in *The Knights of Labor*, one of which was the claim that the IWPA had been formed by Bakunin in 1872. Yet, like Parsons, the Federalist International traced its ancestry back to the body created in 1864 rather than one formed at the St. Imier Congress of 1872. This is why the last Congress of the International in 1877 was its ninth. As for “headed by Marx” this simply reflects Marxist bolstering of Marx’s position in the International. While he was a member of the General Council and played a significant role in it, at no time was the International a Marxist body. Indeed, when Marx sought to impose his political ideas on it, the bulk of the organisation rejected this and he ended up expelling nearly every national Federation.

<sup>3</sup> “Anarchism”, *The Alarm*, 6 and 20 February 1886.

<sup>4</sup> Le Blanc, 39.

<sup>5</sup> Albert R. Parsons, “A Correction”, *The Knights of Labor*, 11 December 1886.

**G R E A T**  
**Commemoration Meeting**  
**OF THE**  
**11th of November**  
**WILL TAKE PLACE**  
**Thursday, November 11th, 8 P. M.**  
**A T**  
**TERRACE LYCEUM, 206 E. Broadway**  
**ADMISSION 10 CENTS**  
**Speakers in various languages will explain the meaning of the 11th of November**

***Mother Earth*, October 1909**

The reviewer also took issue when the book stated that the “IWA differs only in a few particulars from the IWPA” as Bakunin “and Marx differed in more than a few particulars” (hence his expulsion). This suggests that Parsons was simply noting the similarities between Marx and Bakunin which the reviewer was denying. Given that the IWPA, like the Federalist International, aimed to unite the labour movement around economic organisation and struggle as had the International in 1864, Parsons was right as Marx was a member of the International from 1864 to 1872 and could have been a member of the Federalist International (each federation could also pursue its own favoured political strategy, simply not make it mandatory on all sections as Marx sought). It is doubtful that Marx would have subscribed to “opposition to centralized power, abolition of authoritative, compulsory or force government in any form” but that is another issue. As for the *Communist Manifesto*, that was sold alongside a host of other pamphlets including those by Bakunin and Reclus so hardly has the significance Le Blanc thinks it has.

So this claim falls due to an unwillingness to investigate the original letter, relying on a biased and ignorant source and failing to understand the history of the International.

3) “A study of the *Alarm*... reveals many more positive references to Marx than to Bakunin”<sup>1</sup>

This is an invention as the reference Le Blanc provides makes no such claim on the page given – or anywhere else in the book.

Interestingly, *The Alarm* quoted *Liberty*’s critique of a “State Socialist” comments on Bakunin as being a product of “fearing the effect of Bakunin’s tremendous onslaught on State Socialism, felt the necessity of combating him, and saw no other way to do it successfully than to attribute to him opinions which he never thought of championing.”<sup>2</sup>

4) “Another revealing text regarding Parson’s views on Marx is [his book] *Anarchism*... [which] is divided into two parts. The first offers an explicitly Marxist analysis of capitalism, with lengthy extracts from the *Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*. It offers an outline of American history from colonial times to 1886, in which

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***Anarchy means no domination or authority of one man over another, yet you call that ‘disorder.’ A system which advocates no such ‘order’ as shall require the services of rogues and thieves to defend it you call ‘disorder.’***

***But the fact is, that at every attempt to wield the ballot, at every endeavour to combine the efforts of workingmen, you have displayed the brutal violence of the police club, and this is why I have recommended rude force, to combat the ruder force of the police.***

***I say to you: ‘I despise you. I despise your order; your laws, your force-propped authority.’***

***HANG ME FOR IT!***

– Louis Lingg

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Parsons attempts to apply Marx’s materialist conception of history to the United States. The second half of the book contains extracts from speeches of Parsons and codefendants... followed by several anarchist essays by Peter Kropotkin and others, condemning the institution of the state and describing a stateless communism. These explicitly anarchist selections were undoubtedly appealing because the Marxist analysis of the state... was not available to most socialists in this period”<sup>3</sup>

The “second half of the book” is misleading for the first part amounts to less than 20% of the book (38 pages), the second to 75% (150 pages). In terms of the first part, the sections by Parsons are an account of the development of capitalism in America, the conflict between the economic interests associated with slavery and wage-labour, and notes the increase in industry and the corresponding rise of the proletariat. This, to state the obvious, is *not* an exclusively Marxist analysis. Proudhon had analysed this process in *System of Economic Contradictions* (1846) and recognised in *Du Principe fédératif* (1863) that the civil war was simply the exploiters of the North and South fighting only over the type of servitude workers would suffer – whether as slaves or proletarians. This explains why *Freedom*’s review of Parsons’ book mentions “Marx and the historical school of economists” but, unlike Le Blanc, did not view it

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<sup>1</sup> Le Blanc, 39.

<sup>2</sup> *The Alarm*, 23 January 1886.

<sup>3</sup> Le Blanc, 40.

significant and urged “our readers to obtain a copy as soon as possible”.<sup>1</sup>

Significantly, Parsons *diverts* from Marx when he stresses that economic slavery means political slavery:

One hundred years’ experience proves, that those who control the industries of the country control its votes; that wealth votes; that poverty cannot vote; that citizens who must sell their labor or starve, will sell their votes when the same alternative is presented. The working-class of the United States have been deluded for one hundred years, with the belief that they possessed political sovereignty and law-making powers... Political liberty is possessed by those only who also possess economic liberty.<sup>2</sup>

Compare this to Marx who stated that the “fundamental contradiction” of a democracy under capitalism is that the classes “whose social slavery the constitution is to perpetuate” it “puts in possession of political power through universal suffrage.”<sup>3</sup> He listed America amongst the countries where the proletariat could achieve its goals by electoral means, as did Engels (positions Le Blanc fails to mention). In contrast, anarchists had argued that the workers’ political power under capitalism did exist due to their economic situation:

The International declares that, so long as the working masses shall remain plunged in misery, in economic servitude, and in this forced ignorance to which economic organization and present society condemn them, all the political reforms and revolutions... will avail them nothing.<sup>4</sup>

So, yes, this is a “revealing text” as it does not support Le Blanc’s claims. It is undoubtedly materialist but it reflects either views shared by anarchists and Marx or, crucially, only held by anarchists.

As for the notion Parsons included works by Kropotkin and other anarchists because of a lack of Marxist accounts of the State, the more obvious reason was that he *agreed* with them. Likewise, it is churlish – but essential – to note that Kropotkin

and Reclus also condemned capitalism along with the state. To fail to mention this misleads the reader for anarchism has never been just against the State, it has always been socialist (indeed, its opposition to the State is driven by its socialism). Yet to acknowledge this would undermine the importance he attaches to the fact that members of the IWPA “considered themselves, equally, anarchists and socialists and communists”<sup>5</sup> – for so did Kropotkin, Malatesta and other anarchist-communists. As for Bakunin and Proudhon, they considered themselves as anarchists and socialists (as did Benjamin Tucker, whose ideas Le Blanc misunderstands).

Evidence of an awareness of anarchism is lacking. Bakunin, for example, was not someone “who romantically extolled the liberating qualities of violence” nor was Sergi Nechayev “his disciple” (in fact Bakunin broke with him over his *Catechism for Revolutionaries*) and the notion that Kropotkin “thoughtfully theorized what the hoped-for future society would look like” at this time shows a woeful ignorance of his writings.<sup>6</sup> Le Blanc’s Kropotkin comment is presumably a reference to *The Conquest of Bread*, which was published in 1892 based on articles written after his release from prison in 1886 and, moreover, it concentrates on what a social revolution required to be successful. Between 1877 and 1883, Kropotkin was focused critiquing capitalist society, stressing the need for the labour movement to follow the example of the Federalist International (this being a constant theme of his writings, incidentally) and discussing what was needed to achieve a social revolution – expropriation of property by the workers directly. Any discussion of “the hoped for future society” was rare at this time (if slightly more common in later years).

Then there is the question of the IWPA’s federalism for both the current struggle against capitalism and the future socialist society. Le Blanc mentions this in passing but does not explain why their “decentralist predilections helped guarantee that the successes of the Chicago IWPA would not be duplicated in other cities”<sup>7</sup>, presumably because Marxist dogma asserts that centralism is better. Nor does he mention their experience of Marxist parties such as the Workingmen’s Party of the United States whose “unified party’s platform clearly

<sup>1</sup> “A Voice from the Dead”, *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Socialism*, February 1888.

<sup>2</sup> *Anarchism*, 21.

<sup>3</sup> “The Class Struggles in France”, *Collected Works* 10: 79

<sup>4</sup> Bakunin, “The Political Theology of Mazzini and the International”, *Liberty*, 20 November 1886.

<sup>5</sup> Le Blanc, xxxi.

<sup>6</sup> Le Blanc, 46.

<sup>7</sup> Le Blanc, 56.

reflected the dominance of Marxist thinking” with its centralised national organisation and a “basic Marxist electoral strategy”.<sup>1</sup> The IWPA’s support for federalism reflected the lessons they had drawn from being members of such organisations. He also assumes that the pro-union section was the majority when it was possible that, as in the SLP and its ancestor parties, they were the minority and so would never had been allowed to pursue their activities in a centralist regime. Likewise, he ignores the power centralisation places into the hands of a few leaders who then use it to secure their position and stifle – or expel – dissidents. Federalism, in contrast, empowers the membership and allows different sections to pursue different tactics and so show in practice which is more fruitful.

The fundamental problem is that Le Blanc *fails* “to look at the living movement that these revolutionaries helped to lead”<sup>2</sup> as he promises. Rather, he simply parrots Marxist nonsense about anarchism as if it were accurate and relies on secondary sources which reflect his prejudices. Someone who actually reads *The Alarm* could not suggest that the IWPA was anything other than anarchists.

Ultimately, it is hard to combine praise like “Parsons and Spies were among the finest that our working class has produced”, had “a deep thoughtfulness” and were “amazingly perceptive” with the claim that they did not understand the ideas that they advocated, that they lacked the ability to comprehend that they were really Marxists – but then that incapacity was apparently widespread in their contemporaries whether they considered themselves Marxists (like Engels) or Anarchists (like Kropotkin). Still, we can agree that their “outlook contained not only an inspiring vision but also considerable sophistication, which made them a force to be reckoned with”<sup>3</sup> for that was because they were anarchists as Le Blanc inadvertently shows:

The approach of the Chicagoans [was] a revolutionary rejection of electoralism, combined with a focus on building a mass working-class movement through trade

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***Yes, the anarchists demand the re-installation of the disinherited members of the human family. It is, therefore, quite natural that the privileged classes should hate them.***

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– Adolph Fischer

union efforts and other struggles for economic justice<sup>4</sup>

In short, the very thing which Marx had mocked Bakunin for advocating in the International. Hence the irony of his suggestion that “the so-called anarchists were far closer to revolutionary Marxism than were the moderate leaders of the SLP”<sup>5</sup> given that the party followed Marx’s strategy and organisational principles.

Le Blanc refuses to acknowledge this and insists on claiming that it is “misleading to simply label” the Martyrs as anarchists for the “word had a different connotation for them than it does today. The sharp differentiation between socialism and anarchism developed only in later years.”<sup>6</sup> Sadly, he fails to inform his readers what this “different connotation” was and how it differs from that held today. As such, the statement is meaningless.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, the “sharp differentiation between socialism and anarchism” was something Marxists at the time insisted upon when they rejected anarchist claims to being socialists. Still, given that Marxism in practice simply confirmed anarchist warnings it is understandable if – in the face of reformist opportunism and Bolshevik State capitalist tyranny – anarchists came to differentiate themselves from what “socialism” came to mean for the general public.

As well as the factual and contextual issues with Green’s and Le Blanc’s assertions, another problem is that no Marxist at the time suggested the IWPA was anything other than anarchist.

The SLP denounced any suggestion that the IWPA was socialist and the “language [of its official paper] became more vituperous – indistinguishable, finally, from that used in the German-American middle-class press – in an article highlighting the

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<sup>1</sup> Philip S. Foner, *The Workingmen’s Party of the United States: A History of the First Marxist Party in the Americas* (Minneapolis: MEP Publications, 1984), 27-8.

<sup>2</sup> Le Blanc, 40.

<sup>3</sup> Le Blanc, 56, 57, 56.

<sup>4</sup> Le Blanc, 41.

<sup>5</sup> Le Blanc, 40.

<sup>6</sup> Le Blanc, 40.

<sup>7</sup> Yet anarchism apparently changing does not stop Marxists reprinting the attacks of Marx, Engels and others on it. If these are still applicable, then surely it has not changed?

party's ideological distinctions between socialism and anarchism. The Chicago anarchists were called 'a band of robbers, incendiaries and murderers,' 'desperados,' and 'our most bitter enemies'.<sup>1</sup>

As the SLP is generally not viewed positively by Leninists we can move on to Engels, who neither publicly nor privately suggested the IWPA was Marxist (indeed, he only wrote slightly more than Marx about it and, unlike Marx, did not have the excuse of being in the grave). Privately, he was dismissive and suggested that "[n]o doubt the Chicago affair will put paid to the anarchist farce in America. The chaps can shout their heads off if they want, but pointless rowdyism is something the Americans refuse to put up with, now they have become an industrial nation."<sup>2</sup> Publicly, he made a passing reference to the events in Chicago in 1887, noting in "May the struggle for the Eight Hours' working-day, the troubles in Chicago, Milwaukee, etc., [were] the attempts of the ruling class to crush the nascent uprising of Labor by brute force and brutal class-justice."<sup>3</sup> This reflected the standard European Social-Democratic perspective of rejecting the Martyrs' anarchism but recognising the class-justice involved in their trial and subsequent judicial murder.<sup>4</sup> Engels, moreover, stressed the importance of the electoral politics which the IWPA had come to reject:

And with true American instinct this consciousness led them at once to take the next step towards their deliverance: the formation of a political workingmen's party, with a platform of its own, and with the conquest of the Capitol and the White House for its goal.<sup>5</sup>

Lenin, of course, did not quote this passage (or the many similar ones) in *The State and Revolution*. Engels, significantly, also linked this to the rise of Social-Democracy in Europe:

For, as I said before, there cannot be any doubt that the ultimate platform of the American working class must and will be essentially the same as that now adopted by

the whole militant working class of Europe, the same as that of the German-American Socialist Labor Party.<sup>6</sup>

As with Marx, the trade unions were mentioned only insofar as they were the base for "the electoral battle" which was clearly considered of utmost importance.<sup>7</sup> Engels, in short, advocated the tactics which the IWPA had come to reject.

This position was echoed by other leading Marxists of the time. Ignoring the hysterical denunciations of the SLP against their more successful rival, it should be noted that Karl Marx's daughter and her husband toured America in late 1886 and neither suggested that the Chicago Anarchists were Marxists. Edward Aveling stated "I tell you that I do not hold the same views as the anarchists, but I should be less than a man if I did not in this huge meeting make it my first business to say that I believe that if those men are hanged it is the *Chicago Times* and *Tribune* that will have hanged them." His wife concurred: "I am no anarchist... they are going to hang these men, not as murderers, but as anarchists."<sup>8</sup> Both were clear on what Marxist tactics were, with Mr. Aveling summarising as follows:

Educate, agitate, organise, form a great labour party, and conquer political power... When you have conquered political power, you must conquer economic power. That is to say, with political power in your hand, you must put an end to this wage system... You have manhood suffrage in this country... Now we have not manhood suffrage in Europe. Your chances are greater than ours.

A position echoed by Mrs. Aveling:

The votes of New York, Chicago and other towns shows you how much you can do. But you must hold together as a party, different from, opposed to all others, one with a distinct platform, and pledged to the cause of labour... your victory is assured. That victory had begun. It began with the

<sup>1</sup> Hartmut Keil, "The Impact of Haymarket on German-American Radicalism", *International Labor and Working-Class History* (Spring, 1986), 21

<sup>2</sup> "Engels to Liebknecht, 12 May 1886", *Marx-Engels Collected Works* 47: 446.

<sup>3</sup> "The Labor Movement in America. Preface to the American Edition of *The Condition of the Working Class in England*", *Marx-Engels Collected Works* 26: 435.

<sup>4</sup> Raymond C. Sun, "Misguided Martyrdom: German Social Democratic Response to the Haymarket Incident, 1886-87", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 29, (Spring, 1986)

<sup>5</sup> Engels, 435.

<sup>6</sup> Engels, 440.

<sup>7</sup> Engels, 437.

<sup>8</sup> "Lecture on 8 November 1886", *Knights of Labor* (Chicago), 4 December 1886.

68,000 votes for George, and the 25,000 votes you've got here

This was precisely the strategy the IWPA rejected in favour of the one which Bakunin had advocated in the International and which Kropotkin had championed in the pages of *Le Révolté* between 1879 and 1882.

However, their position on the Martyrs was somewhat contradictory, as shown in a later book on American socialism based on their tour. They began with the usual Marxist position on “anarchism”:

It is hardly necessary to say that, as Socialists, we are not Anarchists, and are, of necessity, entirely opposed to the methods and aims of Anarchism. It is true both Anarchist and Socialist attack the present capitalist system. But the Anarchist attacks it from the individualist, conservative, reactionary point of view, the Socialist from the communist, progressive, revolutionary standpoint. The two ‘schools’ – if the one can be called a school which has no definite programme, no clear teaching – have, in fact, nothing in common.<sup>1</sup>

The working classes, they asserted, “were as intensely opposed as any Socialist could be” to the “teachings – the avowed teachings – of the eight men sentenced”.<sup>2</sup> No attempt was made to explain how the Martyrs can have “teachings” and “no definite programme, no clear teachings”.

This suggests that they had not familiarised themselves with the ideas of the anarchism at all, as shown when they contradict themselves:

it must be borne in mind that well-nigh every word spoken by the chief defendants at the Chicago trial... could be indorsed by Socialists; for they there preached, not Anarchism, but Socialism.<sup>3</sup>

What is it to be? Either their ideas are “individualist, conservative, reactionary” or they are Socialist. They cannot be both. Perhaps it is simply the case they bothered to read the

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***State Socialism is the wage-labor system perfected; but as the wage-system is the child of slavery, and the father of all rascality, we do not want it perfected... differences between State Socialism and Anarchistic Socialism have caused us to throw the State overboard for Anarchism***

– C.S. Griffin, “Anarchy”, *The Alarm*, 7 March 1885

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defendants’ trial speeches and not *The Alarm* or any other anarchist journal?

The differences between the Anarchist and the Marxist are not down to one being a socialist and the other not (as both are, albeit one is libertarian and the other authoritarian), it is down to the tactics used and what is considered as being *genuine* socialism.

As regards the former, the Marx-Avelings suggested, the “Socialist believes in organisation; he believes in political action, in the seizure of political power by the working class as the only means of attaining that complete economic emancipation which is the final aim.”<sup>4</sup> This is only true if you think that Marxism is the only form of socialism. Yet Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin and Malatesta all called themselves socialists while rejecting that definition – other than “believes in organisation”, of course.

That is strategy. What of the goal, what of the vision of socialism? Even here there are differences. Mr. Aveling gave a telling example of Marxist socialism:

Your post-office, a great and immense institution is worked, by whom? By the community, for the benefit of the community. That is socialism... you have already a socialistic institution, the post-office.<sup>5</sup>

Lenin in 1917 mentioned that a “witty German Social-Democrat of the seventies of the last century called the postal service an example of the socialist economic system” and commented that this “is very true.”<sup>6</sup> So commonplace was this example in Marxist circles that in 1896 an anarchist newspaper

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<sup>1</sup> Edward & Eleanor Marx-Aveling, *The Working-Class Movement in America* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1891), 166-7.

<sup>2</sup> Marx-Aveling, 181

<sup>3</sup> Marx-Aveling, 169-70.

<sup>4</sup> Marx-Aveling, 168.

<sup>5</sup> “Lecture on 8 November 1886”, *Knights of Labor* (Chicago), 4 December 1886.

<sup>6</sup> “The State and Revolution”, *The Lenin Anthology* (New York: Princeton University, 1975), 345.



bemoaned its use when a “State Socialist exhausts all the arguments he knows of in combating the theories of Anarchy” as if “that settles it”.<sup>1</sup> Another Marxist, against Lucy Parsons, “advocated state control of the means of production and distribution by a ‘socialist’ political machine. He was interested in working through the electoral process to achieve state power, and he wanted the respect of the establishment”.<sup>2</sup>

The use of this example showed that Marxists did not think workers’ control of production as being an essential condition for socialism and so Anarchists rightly argued that Marxism was just state-capitalism.

Unsurprisingly, the Chicago anarchists had also not been impressed by this example:

The post office... is the well-known sanctuary of office brokerage and corruption... From experience of the State socialistic tendency on a small scale, we may infer how it would work upon a great [one]. It would at once create a swarming army of officeholders, that is, so many more non-producers, for the rest of us to support. It would create a corresponding multitude of office-seekers, as if we had not far too many of them already. It would entail on all branches of business and trade the slowness, clumsiness, inefficiency and corruption which always characterize officialism... under no form of government can the people really be the masters... the evil consequences of State socialism... would *not* follow from anarchistic socialism<sup>3</sup>

What was the anarchist alternative? As noted above, unions would seize the means of production and workers’ associations would run industry. To

quote a Bolshevik historian, “the Verviers Congress... decided that it was necessary to realise collectivity of property, ‘that is to say the taking possession of social capital by groups of workers’ – this being obviously an anarchist move, and not a socialist [i.e., Marxist] one at all.”<sup>4</sup> This was the perspective with which the Bolsheviks undermined the factory committees and workers’ control after they seized power, instead centralising industry – as urged by the *Communist Manifesto* – in the hands of the State and so handing it over to the bureaucracy who, as a new ruling class, exploited and oppressed the wage-workers instead of the bourgeoisie.

**“ALL government is tyranny”**  
**“PERSONAL liberty is free contract”**  
**“PRIVATE capital is legalised theft.”**  
**“SELF-GOVERNMENT is the abolition of the State.”**  
**“CAPITAL is by legal enactment the property of a few, but by natural right and human necessity it is the common property of all.”**  
*The Alarm*, 11 October 1884

To summarise, the IWPA rejected Marxism in both tactics (“political action”) and goals (state centralisation and control). What “Marxism” it may have expressed was either a legacy in terminology from when some of its leading members were Marxists or simply a reflection of ideas which

anarchism shares with Marxism (but which Marxists seem unaware of).

*Was the IWPA a “synthesis” of Anarchism and Marxism?*

In what can only be considered as an improvement, Staughton Lynd and Andrej Grubacic claimed that “Haymarket anarchists and the so-called ‘Chicago Idea’” was an historical example of a “synthesis between anarchism and Marxism”. The “so-called Haymarket anarchists” took the “need for a fusion of anarchism and Marxism for granted and did their best to create it before their untimely deaths”, referencing Green’s book.<sup>5</sup> This “synthesis” was defined in these terms:

What is Marxism? It is an effort to understand the structure of the society in which we live so as to make informed

<sup>1</sup> “Look at the Post Office!”. *The Firebrand*, 27 December 1896.

<sup>2</sup> Ashbaugh, 174.

<sup>3</sup> C.L. James, “Anarchy”, *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis*, 160-1.

<sup>4</sup> Stekloff, 337

<sup>5</sup> Staughton Lynd and Andrej Grubacic, *Wobblies and Zapatistas: Conversations on Anarchism, Marxism and Radical History* (Oakland: PM Press, 2008), 11, 13.

predictions and to act with greater effect. What is anarchism? It is the attempt to imagine a better society and insofar as possible to “prefigure,” to anticipate that society by beginning to live it out, on the ground, here and now.

Isn't it perfectly obvious that these two orientations are both needed, that they are like having two hands to accomplish the needed task of transformation?<sup>1</sup>

This is a strange claim given that anarchists have developed theories to help understand capitalism and how it operates. The notion that only Marxists have done that is simply untenable. It implies that anarchists act while Marxists think, which may be how Marxists view the matter but it simply is false as there is a substantial body of anarchist theory on how capitalism and the state operates. That Marxists cannot be bothered to read it is not our fault. This is not to say that Anarchism cannot utilise aspects of Marxist theory – such as its critique of capitalism – but that cannot be equated to a “synthesis”.

In terms of what anarchism can apparently bring to Marxism, this is very much against the Marxist tradition. Marxists from Marx and Engels onwards have dismissed – mocked – the idea that we should “prefigure” (i.e., apply) our ideas of a better world within the movements fighting the current one – the underlying assumption seems to be that centralised, hierarchical bodies are more efficient as shown by the capitalist regime. It is not explained why mimicking the structures forged to secure minority rule, oppression and exploitation can be used to end them – and the experience of such parties shows that it does not.

It gets worse as Lynd suggests anarchism is merely anti-state:

“anarchism” is an inadequate term to describe what the new movement, or movements, affirm. Like the Haymarket anarchists, like the IWW, those who travel long distances to confront the capitalists of the world at their periodic gatherings, are not only opposed to “the state.” They are equally opposed to capitalism, the wage system, and corporate imperialism.<sup>2</sup>

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***Legalized capital and the state stand or fall together. They are twins. The liberty of labor makes the state not only unnecessary, but impossible. When the people – the whole people – become the state, that is, participate equally in governing themselves, the state of necessity ceases to exist... The workshops will drop into the hands of the workers, the mines will fall to the miners and the land and all other things will be controlled by those who possess and use them. This will be, there can then be no title to anything aside from its possession and use.***

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– Albert R. Parsons

Yet anarchists have always been opposed to capitalism. Indeed, we have been so before Marxism existed: the first book by a self-proclaimed anarchist was Proudhon's *What is Property?* (the *Communist Manifesto* repeated its analysis of capital without acknowledgement while insulting its author). Since then, anarchists have presented an interwoven critique of both capitalism and the State, analysing their origins and workings while building movements which aimed to abolish both. In short, anarchism *is* “anti-state”, but it has always been the anti-state wing of *the socialist movement*.

Yes, indeed, the Haymarket anarchists opposed capitalism and sought to confront the capitalists of their time but that was because anarchism is a school of socialism. In doing so they drew upon Marx's critique of political economy but then so did Bakunin and no one has suggested that he produced a “synthesis” of Anarchism and Marxism.

## Conclusions

As can be seen, claims made about Chicago Anarchists' non-Anarchism rest on ignorance of anarchism and its history. Yes, the Chicago Anarchists called themselves socialists – as did Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta and a host of other anarchists well-known or not. Yes, they waved the red flag – but before, during and after this period anarchists across the globe used this symbol of socialism. Yes, the Chicago anarchists embraced class struggle and the need for

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<sup>1</sup> Lynd and Grubacic ,12.

<sup>2</sup> Lynd and Grubacic, 19.

working class organisation, as did Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta, Goldman and the mainstream of the anarchist movement. Yes, a few communist-anarchists embraced terrorism – as did adherents of other theories – and distained working in unions but this were positions Kropotkin – for example – combated in the early 1880s and afterwards. As such, support for collective action in the labour movement is not somehow anti-anarchist and it is not (and it is staggering that this needs to be mentioned) exclusively “Marxist” – indeed, the class struggle and the labour movement were not conjured up the writings of two German philosophy students.<sup>1</sup> Yes, they embraced a version of the labour theory of value and argued that wage-labour resulted in oppression and exploitation, a position expounded by Proudhon before Marx and embraced by Bakunin and even if later anarchists rejected aspects or all of the former, they still held to the latter.

Likewise, the ignorance of Marxists regarding their own tradition plays its part. The desire to distance Marx and Engels from the Social-Democracy they so encouraged makes for a distorted perspective – not least for Leninists who think that Marx and Engels had no illusions in terms of the power of the vote in a bourgeois state. They falsely project backwards the Leninist revision of Marxism to the nineteenth century.

Ultimately, if the likes of Ashbaugh, Nelson, Green and Le Blanc are correct then the following people are wrong: the Haymarket Martyrs, other members of the IWPA like Lucy Parsons and Lizzie and William Holmes, Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, Peter Kropotkin, Errico Malatesta and other anarchists across the world. To these can be added: Frederick Engels, Edward Aveling, Eleanor

Aveling-Marx and the American SLP, amongst other State Socialists who, as would be expected, did not understand anarchism but also apparently did not really understand Marxism either as they failed to see the IWPA as Marxists.

It is possible, of course. Conventional wisdom can be wrong – what is accepted as “true” can be at odds with the facts (see many of the myths associated with anarchism spread by its opponents) and should be challenged and exposed. This is not the case here and rather than a debunking rooted in

a clear understanding of the facts, we get assertions based on unspecified assumptions – for none of these authors even bother to specify what anarchism *is* in order to show why the IWPA does not meet that definition. Indeed, a clear understanding of

anarchist theory and history would show precisely why it was anarchist even if its members retained some terminology and perspectives from their Marxist pasts.

Correcting mis-readings of ideas and movements is important for these all too easily become accepted truths through repetition. Some of these mis-readings are more innocent than others but all flow from an unwillingness to take anarchism seriously as a theory and movement. As such, debunking such claims are worthwhile if time consuming, for false assertions cannot be truly refuted without evidence. The political evolution of members of the IWPA from Marxism to Anarchism is worth recounting – particularly as it allows us to debunk myths about both. It also allows us to quote their writings and make their ideas better known today, so allowing us to learn from their experiences and seek to apply these lessons in today’s much changed but still capitalist world.

**A change of bosses, political or financial, leaves the wage-worker just where he was before the change... A change of masters is in reality no change at all, and the right to choose one’s jailor is very poor recompense for one’s imprisonment. To be happy and free the workers must change the system which makes a ‘boss’, either political or financial, possible.**

**“The election”**

***The Alarm, 22 November 1884***

**anarchy means a condition of society which has no king, emperor, president or ruler of any kind. In other words anarchy is the social administration of all affairs by the people themselves; that is to say, self-government, individual liberty.**

**– Albert R. Parsons**

# Manifestos, Reports and Leaflets

## Manifesto of the International Working People's Association

Pittsburgh, 16 October 1883<sup>1</sup>

FELLOW-WORKMEN: The Declaration of Independence says:

“...But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them (the people) under absolute Despotism, it is *their right*, it is *their duty* to throw off such government and provide new guards for their future security.”

This thought of Thomas Jefferson was the justification for armed resistance by our forefathers, which gave birth to our Republic, and do not the necessities of our present time compel us to reassert their declaration?

Fellow-Workmen, we ask you to give us your attention for a few moments. We ask you candidly to read the following manifesto issued in your behalf, in the behalf of your wives and children, in behalf of humanity and progress.

Our present society is founded on the exploitation of the propertyless classes by the propertied. This exploitation is such that the propertied (capitalists) buy the working force body and soul of the propertyless, for the price of the mere costs of existence (wages), and take for themselves, i.e. steal, the amount of new values (products) which exceeds this price, whereby wages are made to represent the necessities instead of the earnings of the wage-labourer.

As the non-possessing classes are forced by their poverty to offer for sale to the propertied their working forces, and as our present production on a grand scale enforces technical development with immense rapidity, so that by the application of an always decreasing number of human working forces, an always increasing

amount of products is created; so does the supply of working forces increase constantly, while the demand therefore decreases. This is the reason why the workers compete more and more intensely in selling themselves, causing their wages to sink, or at least on the average, never raising them above the margin necessary for keeping intact their working ability.



Whilst by this process the propertyless are entirely debarred from entering the ranks of the propertied, even by the most strenuous exertions, the propertied, by means of the ever-increasing plundering of the working class, are becoming richer day by day, without in any way being themselves productive.

If now and then one of the propertyless class become rich, it is not by their own labour, but from opportunities which they have to speculate upon, and absorb the labour-product of others.

With the accumulation of individual wealth, the greed and power of the propertied grows. They use all the means for competing among themselves for

the robbery of the people. In this struggle, generally, the less-propertied (middle class) are overcome, while the great capitalists, par excellence, swell their wealth enormously, concentrate entire branches of production, as well as trade and inter-communication, into their hands, and develop into monopolists. The increase of products, accompanied by simultaneous decrease of the average income of the working mass of the people, leads to so-called “business” and “commercial” crises, when the misery of the wage-workers is forced to the extreme.

For illustration, the last census of the United States shows that after deducting the cost of raw material,

<sup>1</sup> Also known as the Pittsburgh Manifesto, this text was drafted by a committee consisting of Victor Drury (a refugee from the Paris Commune,) Johann Most, Albert Parsons, Joseph Reifgraber (Editor of *Die Parole*, St. Louis) and August Spies. It was adopted by the Pittsburgh Congress of the International Working Peoples' Association in October 1883. As well as being issued as a pamphlet, it also appeared in first five issues of *The Alarm* in October-November 1884. (*Black Flag*)

interest, rent, risks, etc., the propertied class have absorbed – i.e., stolen – more than five-eighths of all products, leaving scarcely three-eighths to the producers. The propertied class, being scarcely one-tenth of our population, and in spite of their luxury and extravagance, unable to consume their enormous “profits,” and the producers, unable to consume more than they receive – three-eighths – so-called “over-productions” must necessarily take place. The terrible results of panics are well known.

The increasing eradication of working forces from the productive process, annually increases the percentage of the propertyless population, which becomes pauperised, and is driven to “crime,” vagabondage, prostitution, suicide, starvation, and general depravity. This system is unjust, insane, and murderous. It is therefore necessary to totally destroy it with and by all means, and with the greatest energy on the part of every one who suffers by it, and who does not want to be made culpable for its continued existence by their inactivity.

Agitation for the purpose of organisation; organisation for the purpose of rebellion. In these few words the ways are marked, which the workers must take if they want to be rid of their chains, as the economic condition is the same in all countries of so-called “civilisation,” as the governments of all Monarchies and Republics work hand in hand for the purpose of opposing all movements of the thinking part of the workers, as finally the victory in the decisive combat of the proletarians against their oppressors can only be gained by the simultaneous struggle along the whole line of the bourgeois (capitalistic) society, so therefore the international fraternity of peoples, as expressed in the International Working People’s Association, presents itself a self-evident necessity.

True order should take its place. This can only be achieved when all implements of labour, the soil and other premises of production, in short, capital produced by labour, is changed into societal property. Only by this presupposition is destroyed every possibility of the future spoliation of man by man. Only by common, undivided capital can all be enabled to enjoy in their fullness the fruits of the common toil. Only by the impossibility of accumulating individual (private) capital can everyone be compelled to work who makes a demand to live.

This order of things allows production to regulate itself according to the demand of the whole people, so that nobody need work more than a few hours a day, and that all nevertheless can satisfy their needs. Hereby time and opportunity are given for opening to the people the way to the highest possible civilisation; the privileges of higher intelligence fall with the privileges of wealth and birth. To the achievement of such a system the political organisations of the capitalistic classes – be they Monarchies or Republics – form the barriers. These political structures (States), which are completely in the

hands of the propertied, have no other purpose than the upholding of the present order of exploitation.

All laws are directed against the working people. In so far as the opposite appears to be the case, they serve on one hand to blind the worker, while on the other hand they are simply evaded. Even the school serves only the purpose of furnishing the offspring of the wealthy with those qualities necessary to uphold their class domination. The children of the poor get scarcely a formal elementary training, and this, too, is mainly directed to such branches as tend to producing prejudices, arrogance and servility; in short, want of sense. The Church finally seeks to make complete idiots out of the mass and to make them forego the paradise on earth by promising a fictitious heaven. The capitalistic press, on the other hand, takes care of the confusion of spirits in public life. All these institutions, far from aiding in the education of the masses, have for their object the keeping in ignorance of the people. They are all in the pay and under the direction of the capitalistic classes. The workers can therefore expect no help from any capitalistic party in their struggle against the existing system. They must achieve their liberation by their own efforts. As in former times a privileged class never surrendered its tyranny, neither can it be expected that the capitalists of this age will give up their rulership without being forced to do it.

If there ever could have been any question on this point, it should long ago have been dispelled by the brutalities which the bourgeoisie of all countries – in America as well as in Europe – constantly commits, as often as the proletariat anywhere energetically move to better their condition. It becomes, therefore, self-evident that the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie must have a violent revolutionary character.

We could show by scores of illustrations that all attempts in the past to reform this monstrous system by peaceable means, such as the ballot, have been futile, and all such efforts in the future must necessarily be so, for the following reasons:

The political institutions of our times are the agencies of the propertied class; their mission is the upholding of the privileges of their masters; any reform in your own behalf would curtail these privileges. To this they will not and cannot consent, for it would be suicidal to themselves.

That they will not resign their privileges voluntarily we know; that they will not make any concessions to us we likewise know. Since we must then rely upon the kindness of our masters for whatever redress we have, and knowing that from them no good may be expected, there remains but one recourse – FORCE! Our forefathers have not only told us that against despots force is justifiable, because it is the only means, but they themselves have set the immemorial example.

By force our ancestors liberated themselves from political oppression, by force their children will have to liberate themselves from economic bondage. "It is, therefore, your right; it is your duty," says Jefferson – "to arm!"

What we would achieve is, therefore, plainly and simply:

*First:* Destruction of the existing class rule, by all means, i.e., by energetic, relentless, revolutionary, and international action.

*Second:* Establishment of a free society based upon co-operative organisation of production.

*Third:* Free exchange of equivalent products by and between the productive organisations without commerce and profit-mongery.

*Fourth:* Organisation of education on a secular, scientific, and equal basis for both sexes.

*Fifth:* Equal rights for all without distinction to sex or race.

*Sixth:* Regulation of all public affairs by free contracts between the autonomous (independent) communes and associations, resting on a federalistic basis.

Whoever agrees with this ideal let him grasp our outstretched brother hands!

Proletarians of all countries, unite! Fellow workingmen, all we need for the achievement of this great end is ORGANISATION and UNITY!

There exists now no great obstacle to that unity. The work of peaceful education and revolutionary conspiracy well can and ought to run in parallel lines.

The day has come for solidarity. Join our ranks! Let the drum beat defiantly the roll of battle: "Workmen of all lands, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains; you have a world to win!"

Tremble, oppressors of the world! Not far beyond your purblind sight there dawn the scarlet and sable lights of the JUDGMENT DAY!

## **The Black Flag**

*The Alarm, 29 November 1884*

**The emblem of hunger unfurled by the proletariats of Chicago.**

**The Red Flag borne aloft by thousands of workingmen on Thanksgiving day.**

**The poverty of the poor is created by the robberies of the rich.**

**Speeches, Resolutions and a grand demonstration of the unemployed, the tramps and miserables of the city.**

### **SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS**

A few days before Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>, Thanksgiving day, it was decided by some of the working people of Chicago that the day should be observed in a proper and suitable manner. Steps were taken at once to carry out this resolution and twenty-five thousand copies of the following circular were distributed throughout the city:

#### **TO THE WAGE-WORKERS, THE UNEMPLOYED AND "TRAMPS"**

*Women and Men, Sisters and Brothers:* His excellency, the governor, has by official decree, ordained that next Thursday shall be devoted by the citizens of this state to thanksgiving. You too are called upon to "give thanks." Thanks, because your masters refuse to give you employment! Thanks, because you are hungry and without home or shelter! Thanks, because your masters have kindly taken away from you whatever you have created! Thanks, because your masters have adopted precautions to end your miserable existence by the bullet of the police or militia when your burden becomes unbearable to you and you refuse to die in your hovel in due observance to "law and order."

Yes, you must give thanks that you are permitted to dare the blizzards of the winter without an over-coat, without fit shoes and clothes, while mountains of good clothing, which you made, spoil in the storehouses! Give thanks that you are allowed to suffer the bitter pangs of hunger, while millions of bushels of grain decay and rot in our elevators! For this purpose a great Thanksgiving meeting has been arranged for you on Market Square. The same will take place at 2.30 o'clock on next Thursday. After the meeting a grand demonstration will be held to express our gratitude to our most benevolent, generous and kind "Christian Brothers" on Michigan Avenue etc. To them we are principally indebted for the glorious institution which have brought about the blessed condition we enjoy. Every man and woman, and every one who feels the sting of mockery contained in this official order for Thanksgiving, should be present.

#### **THE COMMITTEE OF THE GRATEFUL**

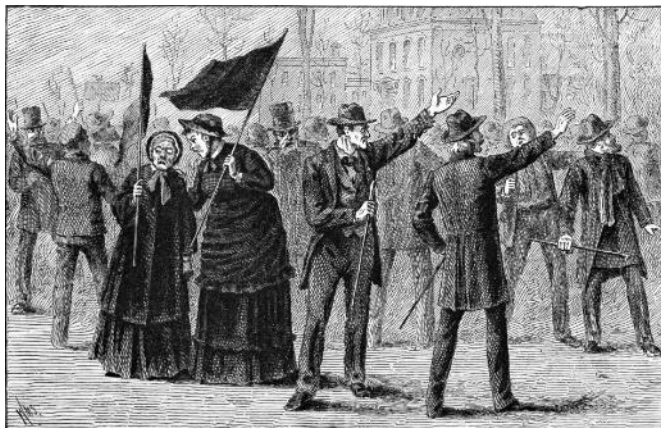
Working People's International Association

On the day designated, Thursday, the 27<sup>th</sup> of November, opened in sleet and rain. The wind blew sharp and

frosty and left a stinging, uncomfortable sensation upon the exposed portion of the face or hands. At the time announced, 2.30 P.M., over three thousand persons had assembled on Market street, between Madison and Randolph. The mingled rain and sleet fell unpitifully from above, while the ground beneath was covered with mud and water. The severity of the weather showed some of the spirit that must be in the people who were not deterred by it.

Before the meeting was called to order a stranger mounted the stand and said he would call them to order. He said: "What you want is guns, you don't want to be here talking." Just then several persons stepped up to him and told him the regular arrangement had been made for the speakers, but he could be heard in the end if he so desired.

The meeting was soon called to order by A.R. Parsons. He said: "We are assembled here on this Thanksgiving Day as the representatives of the disinherited class of the earth to speak in the name of the 40,000 unemployed workingmen of Chicago, 2,000,000 in the United States, and 15,000,000 in other civilised countries. He likened the good dinners the capitalists were enjoying today to the feast of Belshazzar, there were wrung from the blood of our wives and children, and the champaign thus obtained ought to strangle them.<sup>1</sup> In all the churches today they are preaching the scriptures to the capitalists. But let us read the Scriptures as they are written, and see what their bible has to say of them." He then read:



AN ANARCHIST PROCESSION.

St. James, Chapter v. says: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your misery which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them

shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as if it were fire. Ye have reaped treasures together for the last day. Behold the hire of the laborers which have reaped down your fields and which you have *kept back by fraud* crieth. Woe to them that bring about iniquity by law."<sup>2</sup> The prophet Habakuk says: "Woe to him that built a

town by blood, and established a city by iniquity!" The prophet Amos says: "Hear this, oh, ye that swallow up the needy even to make the poor to fail from the land, that ye may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes!" The prophet Isiah says: "Woe unto them that join house to house and lay field to field till there is no place, that they may be alone in the midst of the earth!" Solomon says: "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed off their filthiness: a generation, oh, how lofty are their eyes! and how their eye-lids are lifted up! A generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw-teeth as knives to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men."

He closed by saying that we do not intend to leave this matter in the hands of the Lord, or wait for an improved

<sup>1</sup> The feast of Belshazzar, or the story of the writing on the wall (chapter 5 in the Book of Daniel), tells how Belshazzar held a great feast and drinks from the vessels that had been looted in the destruction of the First Temple. A hand appears and writes on the wall. The terrified Belshazzar calls for his wise men, but they are unable to read the writing. The queen advises him to send for Daniel who reminds Belshazzar that his father Nebuchadnezzar, when he became arrogant, was thrown down until he learned that God has sovereignty over the kingdom of men. Belshazzar had likewise blasphemed God, and so God sent this hand so showing his days were numbered. (*Black Flag*)

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, Proudhon echoed this when he argued (following Adam Smith) that the real wage of a worker was his product and so:

"There is theft, in commerce and industry, whenever the entrepreneur deducts something from the worker's wages, or receives a bonus in addition to what is due to him.

"I have proven, in dealing with value, that all work must leave a surplus; so that assuming the worker's consumption to be always the same, his labour

should create, in addition to his subsistence, an every greater capital. Under the regime of property, the surplus of labour, essentially collective, passes entirely, like the [economic] rent, to the proprietor: now, between this disguised appropriation and the fraudulent usurpation of a communal good, what is the difference?

"The consequence of this usurpation is that the worker, whose share of the collective is constantly confiscated by the entrepreneur, is always in poverty, while the capitalist is always in profit... political economy, that upholds and advocates this regime, is the theory of theft, as property, the respect of which maintains a such a state of things, is the religion of force." (*Système des contradictions économiques ou Philosophie de la misère* [Paris: Guillaumin, 1846] II: 315). (*Black Flag*)

Thus "property is theft" because the appropriation of the means of life results in wage-labour and so the employer owns both the worker's labour and its product, so producing exploitation. (*Black Flag*)



future existence. We intend to do something for ourselves, and do it in this world.

He introduced as the first speaker C. S. Griffin, who said: This is an International assembly. It represents no locality, or state or nation, it is an assemblage of men in the interest of humanity. We have no quarrel with each other, when we object to being drawn up in line and set to cutting each other's throats, to gratify the political schemes of any government. We do not believe any government, or any class, or any system of industry ought to be allowed to pit man against man, for any cause, and to get at the root of all these evils we must go to the foundation of property rights and the wage system. The old system of labour and capital could no longer meet the demands of our advanced civilisation. Today the whole cry is against over-production, because it operates against humanity. This is all wrong. An over-production ought to be a blessing instead of a curse, as it now is. Now, when the market is glutted with clothing, the mills shut down, and thousands are thrown out of work and consequently deprived of the means to get any of that over-supply, and the result is that men must go ragged because there is too much clothing in the country. This is true of all other things. People must live out of doors, because there are too many houses in the country. There are so many houses now vacant that there is no demand for more, and therefore the builders are idle and cannot earn money to pay rent with. Think of it! Ragged because there is too much clothing in the country. Living out doors because there are too many houses in the country. Hungry because there is too much bread in the country, and freezing because there is too much coal in the country. Can this continue? Is there a man so blind that he cannot see that this system must be changed? No man can wear more than one suit of clothes at a time, or live in more than one house at a time,<sup>1</sup> and we know that our ability to consume cannot be greatly increased under any system, while under the present it is growing weaker, and the genius of the age is still inventing and increasing the producing power. The over-production is on the increase and must continue. Must this over-production be continued as an accumulating lever against the more unfortunate, or shall we uproot this system and let the world enjoy its abundance, and be the more happy the more they produce. A system that tells the working classes that the more they produce the less they shall have of it to enjoy,

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<sup>1</sup> This echoes Proudhon's arguments in *What is Property?*: "The theatre, says Cicero, is common to all; nevertheless, the place that each one occupies is called *his own*; that is, it is a place *possessed*, not a place *appropriated*. This comparison annihilates property; moreover, it implies equality. Can I, in a theatre, occupy at the same time one place in the pit, another in the boxes, and a third in the gallery?" (*Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology* [AK Press, 2009], 93)

<sup>2</sup> This follows Proudhon's contrast between property and possession expounded in *What is Property?* but extends it, like Joseph Déjacque's critique of Proudhon. Proudhon had

is a check on all human progress and cannot continue. The only remedy for this evil is to continue production and to refuse to pay for anything. Everything must be made free to all mankind. We can no longer measure the world with dollars. No man should control anything he has no personal use for. Possession should be his only title, and that title alone should be respected.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Parsons then called for the resolutions, which were then read as follows:

WHEREAS, we have outlived the usefulness of the wage and property system, that is now and must hereafter cramp, limit and punish all increase of production, and can no longer gratify the necessities, rights and ambitions of man; and

WHEREAS, the right of property requires four times more effort to adjust it between man and man than is required to produce, manufacture and distribute it; therefore be it

*Resolved*, that property rights should no longer be maintained or respected. That the great army of useless workers (among which are the lawyers, insurers, brokers, canvassers, jailers, police, politicians, armies and navies), including all useless employees whose sole business is to adjust property claims between man and man, should be deprived of this useless and corrupting employment, and be allowed to spend their energies producing, manufacturing and delivering the necessaries and luxuries of life.

And this is impossible so long as man continues to pay or receive pay for production; therefore be it further

*Resolved*, that no man shall pay for anything, or receive pay for anything, or deprive himself of what he may desire that he finds out of use or vacant. While none can eat more than they ought, under any system, or wear more than one suit of clothes at a time, or occupy more than one house at a time, yet as a free access to all will require more production; therefore be it further

refused to draw communist conclusions from his arguments, instead advocating a market socialism based on a distinction between the goods produced by workers (which were to be sold) and the means of production (which were to be held in common). Déjacque, like the later anarchist-communists, argued that this was contradictory and argued for (libertarian) communism, distribution – possession – according to need rather than deed. See Déjacque's "On the Male and Female Human-Being – Letter to P.J. Proudhon" in *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Vol. 1 No. 2 (Summer 2021). (*Black Flag*)

*Resolved*, that any person who will not spend a reasonable portion of energy in the production, manufacture or distribution of the necessaries, comforts and luxuries of life, is the enemy of all mankind and ought to be treated as such. He who will wilfully or maliciously waste is no better!

As this system cannot be introduced against existing ignorance, selfishness and distrust without the force of arms and strong explosives, therefore be it

*Resolved*, that when all stores, store-houses, vacant tenements and transporting property are thrown open and held open to the free access of the general public, the good of mankind and the saving of blood, requires that all forcible opposition should be dealt with summarily as fast as it may present itself. But none should be harmed or offended for holding opposite opinions; and lastly be it

*Resolved*, that as natural law provides that the more one has the more he wants, therefore the gratification of human desires only can stimulate human ambition. Therefore our policy is wise, humane and practical and ought to be enforced at the earliest possible moment, with a just regard for numbers and implements.

As an expression of our thankfulness in this Thanksgiving Day,

*Resolved*, that we are thankful because we have learned the true cause of poverty and know the remedy, and can only be more thankful when the principles are put in force.

The next speaker was Samuel Fielden. He began by ironically addressing the crowd as Christian brothers, in imitation of the opening of the church services, and immediately began to expose the hypocritical character of their blessings, and of the governor's proclamation, in which they call upon all people to thank God for their great prosperity, when so many were in actual want in

the midst of abundance, and providing no changes for the better and holding up to ridicule all who try to present the remedy. If it is proper for those who have an abundance to give thanks, then it is proper for those who are deprived of all to give curses. How many of you have got something to be thankful for? We don't want to listen to this talk about future blessings, or that we who are poor were born to be poor, or wait for God to help us. When I was a boy my mother taught me to say, "Our Father, who art in Heaven;" but so far as I

know he has never left there. He is where he's got a good thing, and he is going to stick to it. He never will come here until things are better arranged than they are now. Our motto is liberty, equality and fraternity. We do not believe in robbing or abusing a man because he is coloured, or a Chinaman, or was born in this country or that. Our international movement is to unite all countries for the mutual good of all and do away with the robbery class.

The next speaker was August Spies. He pointed to the black flag and said this is the first time that emblem of hunger and starvation has

been unfurled on American soil.<sup>1</sup> It represents that these people have begun to reach the condition of starvation of the older countries. We have got to strike down these robbers that are robbing the working people.

In answer to a call from some Germans in the crowd, Mr. Schwab took the stand and spoke for a few minutes in German.

This finished the regular speaking, and the man who first took the stand came up and the Chairman introduced him. He said: "When the slaves wanted liberty they did not stop for anything. We got our guns, and that is the way to do. Get your guns out and go for them. That is all I have got to say." Three cheers were given for the "Social Revolution."

The meeting then adjourned.

The audience fell into line by fours, forming a procession of over three thousand men, and then moved off headed by the band, which woke the echoes of the

However, the Black Flag has previously been raised by striking workers in Lyons in 1831 and so, like the Red Flag, was a recognised labour movement symbol. See, "Appendix: The Symbols of Anarchy" in volume 1 of *An Anarchist FAQ* (AK Press, 2008). (*Black Flag*)

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<sup>1</sup> Louise Michel had raised the black flag during a demonstration of the unemployed in January 1883 during which three bakers were pillaged by the marchers. She stated at her trial that the "black flag is the flag of strikes and the flag of those who are hungry." (*The Red Virgin: Memoirs of Louise Michel* [University of Alabama Press, 1981], 168)

lofty building around to the strains of the “Marseillaise.” Two large flags, one black and the other red, headed the procession. About midway the procession there was two more large flags, one black and the other red. The following mottos were displayed in the line of march:

“Why we thank? Because our capitalistic christian brothers are happily enjoying our turkey, our wines and our houses!” “Shall we thank our Lords for our misery, destitution and poverty?” “Workmen, organise!” “Liberty without equality is a lie!” “Private capital is the reward of robbery.” “Thanks to our lords who have the kindness to feast upon our earnings.” “Praise to our heavenly and earthly lords. They have made of us miserable, tramps and slaves.” “Exploitation is legal theft.” “All workmen have identical interests.” “The priesthood subserves the exploiter.” “Privilege is injustice.” “No greater crime in our day than poverty.” “Down with wages-slavery.” “The turkeys and champaign upon the tables of our grateful capitalists are very cheap – we paid for them.” “Our capitalistic robbers may well thank their lords, we, their victims have not yet strangled them.” “The proletariat must be their own liberator.”

The line of march was taken up as follows: South on Market street to Monroe, on Monroe to State, north on State to Oak, thence to Rush, north on Rush to Chicago Avenue, West to Dearborn, north on Dearborn to Schiller, west to La Salle, south on La Salle to Erie, thence to Wells, and South on Wells to office of *The*

*Alarm* and *Arbeiter Zeitung*, No.107 Fifth Avenue, the point of destination. Here the crowd assembled amid the strains of “Marseillaise”. The waving of the black and red flags and the cheers of the thoroughly abused proletariat.

Mr. Parsons spoke from the first floor window of the building, and congratulated the men upon the great success of the demonstration. He said that they had shown by their acts that while they knew they were slaves and bondsmen they were discontented, rebellious slaves, determined to emancipate themselves at any cost. He introduced Samuel Fielden, who made a brief and eloquent speech. He said they had this day given fair warning and made a protest that would be heard, and that in the near future the working-class would also make that protest felt. He urged them to organise and prepare for the inevitable conflict which the capitalistic class would force upon them. He said that all nationalities and creeds were swallowed up in the International, which made of all mankind a band of brothers, and by securing justice to each would bring peace, prosperity and happiness to all. Three cheers were proposed and given for our comrades the Anarchists of France and Austria, the Socialists of Germany, the Nihilists of Russia, and the social democrats of England. Three cheers were also given for the noble stand taken by our brothers, in the Hocking Valley, Ohio. Amid cheers for the “Social Revolution,” and the greatest enthusiasm the meeting was adjourned and the great crowd quietly dispersed.

## **Metal Workers**

### **Declaration of Principles of the Metal Workers’ Federation Union of America, Union St., Louis, Mo.**

*The Alarm*, 27 June 1885

The emancipation of labour cannot be brought about whether by the regulation of the hours of labour or by the schedule of wages.

The demands and struggles for higher wages or shorter hours, if granted, would only better the conditions of the wage-workers for a short time.

The entire abolition of the present system of society can alone emancipate the workers; being replaced by a new system, based upon co-operative organisation of production in a free society.

To this end all labour organisations must be brought in connection with the movement.

Most of the Trades Unions as organised today are controlled by a few persons called an executive committee, who, however honest, are unable to see clearly, much less to instruct others as to the true position of the labouring masses.

Every member should be enabled to do his part in the work of progress; the management not centralising in the few, but resting with the whole body of workers.

Our organisation should be a school to educate its members for the new condition of society, when the workers will regulate their own affairs without any interference by the few, who are always more capable to betray their cause.

Since the emancipation of the productive classes must come by their own efforts, it is unwise to meddle in present politics.

All direct struggles of the labouring masses have our fullest sympathy.

Our organisation aims to secure for its members such remunerations as will enable them to live as human beings should live.

Educating its members to be managers of their own affairs, looking to their own interest and using their own interest and using their own judgment about all conditions affecting society and labour.

This is our organisation, based upon the broadest foundation of federalism and reason.

# Thanksgiving!

*The Alarm*, 12 December 1885

## RESPONSE OF THE WORKING PEOPLE TO THE COMMAND TO GIVE THANKS

### Great Demonstration on Market Square by the Ungrateful

#### THE WORKING PEOPLE OF CINCINNATI ALSO REFUSE TO GIVE THANKS

##### A THANKLESS DAY

The day set apart by the well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed, and well-to-do classes to return thanks for the success that crowned their efforts to exploit the working class during the past year was Thursday, November 26. It was a dreary, cold, wet, and uncomfortable day for the half-fed, scantily-clothed, poorly-housed, and poverty-stricken working class, who had been the victims of the God-and-morality "better classes" the past year.

The working people of Chicago felt the sting of the insult and the hollow mockery conveyed in the chief ruler's proclamation commanding the people to "return thanks" for the miserable existence they were compelled to endure. The Anarchists and Internationalists therefore arranged for an indignation meeting of the working people, to whom was addressed the following announcement:

Grand Thanksgiving services of the Chicago workingmen, tramps, and all others who are despoiled and disfranchised, on Market square (Randolph and Market streets), Thanksgiving day, Thursday, November 26, 1885, at 2:30 o'clock p. m. Good "preachers" of the gospel of humanity will officiate. Everyone is invited. Learn how turkeys and other nice things may be procured.

*The Committee of the Grateful.*

At the hour named several hundred men and women had assembled at the corner of Washington and Market streets, where a large red flag waved from the top of a pile of salt-barrels which covered the sidewalk. By the time the meeting was called to order some 2,000 persons stood in the mud and slush, and cold, piercing wind, which was the ideal of a raw, chilly November day, when A.R. Parsons mounted a pile of the salt barrels, and using them as a stand, was introduced as the first speaker. At the conclusion of his remarks he was

followed by William Holmes, who read the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

*Whereas*, The President of the United States has issued his annual proclamation, calling upon the people as a whole to give thanks for prosperity, of which but few of them have a share, and reiterating the lies so often repeated about the well-being of the nation; and

*Whereas*, The existence of a vast army of homeless wanderers, scarcity of employment, business depression, and the poverty and wretchedness of a large majority of the people give the lie to the statement that abundant prosperity prevails. No nation can be prosperous and contented where, in the banquet of life, a small number monopolise the general product, while the many are denied a place at nature's table; therefore

*Resolved*, By this mass-meeting of all classes of citizens, that we vote our vigorous protest against the above-named proclamation at this time; that it is a lie – a stupid, hollow mockery – a sop thrown out by the ruling classes

to tickle the palates of their ignorant dupes and slaves that they may with better security continue to rob them. We reiterate the statement that only when the people shall have come to their own – when land and the natural resources of the earth shall have become free; when liberty shall have become a practical reality, and when the beast of private property in the means of life shall have ceased to sap the energies of the people; when poverty and the fear of want shall have been abolished from the face of the earth – then, and not until then, shall we have cause, as a people, to give thanks for our abundant prosperity.

August Spies and Mrs. Lucy Parsons delivered short addresses. The remarks of the speakers were made from

the standpoint of the *proletariat*. Referring to the proclamation of the President calling upon the people to return thanks, the speakers asked to whom should the wage-workers offer thanks, and for what? Were they to be thankful for the hard times which make the life of the wage-worker an intense struggle for bread, and often times unable to procure even that; were they to be thankful for pauper wages and the miseries which follow a life of drudgery and poverty, and resign themselves and contentedly accept the station of a menial as an act of divine providence? No, perish the thought. Shall the plundered workers return thanks to their despoilers, who give charity to hide their blushes when they look into the faces of their victims? Shall the disinherited, who have by legal enactments been debarred their natural right to an equal and free use of all natural and social forces, return thanks for the soup-houses, poor-houses, wood-yards, and other charitable institutions? Shall the workers give thanks, because they receive two hours' pay for ten hours' work? Are they to be thankful for the compulsory idleness of over 2,000,000 of their fellow-workmen? Thankful for an employer, a "boss" whose "business" it is to take something for nothing, and force them to accept the terms or starve! Thankful for a Republican form of Government which guarantees free speech, free ballot, free press, and free action to the propertied class; a Government with its declaration of independence, constitution, and stars-and-stripes to defend and protect the robbers of labour, while it imprisons, shoots, and hangs the disloyal, rebellious wage-slaves? The First regiment, Illinois State Guards, is at this moment practicing the evolutions of the "street riot drill" in another part of the city for the purpose of murdering in an expeditious and scientific manner the men and women whom the present system has turned adrift to starve. Shall the workers be thankful for that? Shall they be thankful that capitalists the past year have employed the Pinkerton thugs, the police, and military to subjugate the workers in revolt against starvation wages. Shall thanks be returned that the Almighty God blesses the wrong-doer with riches, making paradise for them out of the hells of the poor? Shall we be thankful for privation, for slavery, for poverty? No. Curses, bitter and deep are hereby and now returned to the author of our woes, be that. God or man!

Referring to Chicago, the speaker drew attention to the fact that last winter over 30,000 persons were kept from starvation by the hand of charity. With elevators bursting with food, warehouses groaning with clothing, and houses vacant everywhere, they who produced by their labour these things were made to feel the pangs of hunger and the biting frosts of winter. Beneath the shadow of palaces which they had reared the workers of Chicago, as elsewhere, were huddled together in hovels and huts unfit for human habitation. The wealth produced by the wage-workers of Chicago the past year

was sufficient to furnish them with every comfort, yea, even luxury.

The capitalists and their mouthpieces, the press, pulpit, and politicians, declare that the wage class receive in wages all that they earn. By this they mean that we earn only so much as they compel us to accept. The statistics as given in the capitalistic press, showing the productive capacity of labour in Chicago the past year, are the answer to the question why the workers are poor. Let the wage-workers ponder them well and ascertain where the ten and twelve hours' work for which they receive no pay goes to.

The statistics, showing the profit on labour in Chicago the past year, are as follow:

Number of manufacturing establishments	2,282
Capital invested	\$ 87,392,709
Value of raw material	\$152,628,378
Value of manufactured product	\$292, 246,912
Number of employees	105,725
Total wages paid	\$ 48,382,912
Now deduct the cost of raw material and it shows that labour earned	\$139,287,465
Total wages paid	\$ 48,382,912
	<b>\$ 90,904,553</b>

Or over \$857 profit on each labourer. While each wage-worker earned over \$1,314, they received on an average \$457 each, or less than one third of what they produced.

Each manufacturing establishment averaged a profit of about \$40,000. Some bankrupted, it is true; but others, like Phil Armour, made over \$3,500,000!

#### WHERE IT GOES TO

Manufacturers divide this plunder with landlords, usurers, insurance, the Government, lawyers, and other leeches and parasites.

#### AN ILLUSTRATION

Phil Armour reduced his 10,000 laborers 25 cents per day, which on 10,000 amounts to \$2,500 per day, \$15,000 per week, \$45,000 per month, and \$540,000 per year. Result, a twelve-story palace worth \$1,000,000 in two years.

Potter Palmer builds a \$600,000 palace. There are ten millionaire club-houses in this city which are used for conspiracy against the liberties of the people. There are miles and miles of fashionable avenues lined from end to end with palaces wherein the enslavers and robbers of labour licentiously and riotously carouse upon the wealth filched from the workers.

Shall we be thankful for this infamy, crime, and murder of the innocents? But the "stars-and-stripes" overshadows and smiles upon and protects it all. Behold

the American army, with gleaming bayonets, in long serried line, the American flag at its head leading the column, marching under orders of the President of the United States to protect what? To protect the rights and liberties and welfare of the people? No. To protect the propertied class in their constitutional right to *buy cheap labor* – the Chinese coolie slave – and thus reduce the American labourer to the coolie standard of living. The flag of America has thus become the ensign of privilege and the guardian of property, the defender of monopoly.

Wage-slaves of Chicago, turn your eyes from that ensign of property and fix them upon the emblem of liberty, fraternity, equality – the *Red* flag – that flag which now and ever has waved, and ever will remain the oriflamme of liberty, denoting emancipated labour, the redemption of humanity, and the equality of rights of all.<sup>1</sup>

Let us be thankful, then, that there is a large and increasing number of workingmen and women who have acquired a knowledge of their rights and dare to defend them. Let us be thankful for the dawn which is even now breaking, which is to usher in the new era; thankful for the near approach of that period in human

affairs when man will no longer govern or exploit his fellow-man: the time when the earth and all it contains will be held for the free use of all nature's children.

Let us prepare for the recovery of our stolen right to our inheritance of this fair earth, and let us express the devout and earnest hope that ere many Thanksgiving days come round the workers of the world may, by their devotion to liberty and the best interests of man, abolish and exterminate the whole brood of profit-mongers, rent-takers, and usury-gatherers, and on the ruins of the old erect the new order,

wherein all will associate and co-operate for the purpose of producing and consuming freely, without let or hindrance.

For three hours the assembled men and women had stood in the chilling blasts of this cold and wet November day, while the speakers addressed them as above, when at the conclusion, the *Red* flag was brought to the front and waving it aloft – there ringing cheers were given by them for the

“SOCIAL REVOLUTION!”

This ended the day of Thanksgiving among the *proletariat* of Chicago.

**The flag of America has thus become the ensign of privilege and the guardian of property, the defender of monopoly.**

## **The American Group: Large Mass-Meeting of Workingmen and Women**

*The Alarm*, 6 March 1886

The hall of the American Group, No. 106 E. Randolph street, was filled to overflowing last Sunday with a very intelligent audience of workingmen and women. Mrs Ames occupied the chair, and Mr Bragdon as secretary.

Mrs Ames stated that the meeting would consider the labour movement as represented by Trades Unionism and Socialism. She said that Unionists dealt only with effects while Socialists sought to remove the cause which made labourers dependent upon capitalists. She introduced A. R. Parsons as the first speaker. Mr Parsons on rising said, it is well known that we are Anarchists. We are not the inventors of new theories, but the discoverers of natural law. Hence our opposition to law makers. We seek to discover natural law, and when found to apply it to all the affairs of human life. This renders political government not only unnecessary but useless. The speaker proceeded to discuss the McCormick strike and the attitude of the Trades Unions towards it. He claimed that the Unions were inconsistent, in that they did not object to capitalists, and did not deny their right to discharge but claimed for themselves the right to tell the employer whom to employ. This was an inconsistency which always brought them into trouble from which they could not extricate themselves. The tails goes with the hide. An industrial system that gave one man the power to discharge or employ another could only work evil to those who were subject to that power. Scabs, female and child labour, as well as the enforced idleness caused by machinery, were the effects of the private property system, and must remain while the system lasts. The speaker claimed that Trades Unions would be forced by the logic of events to become Socialists or both they and their Unions would be destroyed. Mr Henry, Mr Moore, Mr Sawyer, Mr Davis, Mr Fielden, Ducey, Walters and Taylor spoke from five to ten minutes each; all in support of the position taken by the first speaker. Several persons joined the group. A large number of circulars, pamphlets and ALARMS were sold.

The audience seemed well pleased and adjourned to meet at the same place next Sunday afternoon. Everybody invited.

<sup>1</sup> An Oriflamme (from Latin: “golden flame”) is a pointed, blood-red banner flown from a gilded lance which was the

battle standard of the King of France in the Middle Ages. (*Black Flag*)

# To The Workmen

## WORKINGMEN:

What is to be done to secure the eight hour workday and its benefits?

The question regarding the practicability of the introduction of the eight hour workday has been sufficiently discussed so that we may consider it as generally understood, and we can proceed to consider the next necessary question: "What is to be done to secure the eight hour workday and its benefits?"

By virtue of the fact, that a large portion of workingmen are permanently or periodically without employment, and for that reason are compelled to offer their labour at most any price, it is an impossibility for the single workingman to demand of his employer a shortening of the hours of labour, increase of wages, etc., as the latter can procure a substitute from those idle workingmen, who are willing to work at smaller wages.

It is therefore a necessity that all workingmen organise themselves in their respective branches of labour, no matter whether they are skilled or unskilled labouring-men. Further, that these organisations maintain connections with each other for the purpose of mutual assistance and united action.

The working population thus organised, will be able to secure the introduction of the eight hour workday.

It is in the nature of the case, that the manufacturers desire to procure labour as cheap as possible in order to sell more goods and make higher profits. Therefore they will in the future as well as now do everything to increase the productive ability of the workers to the highest point, so that they may benefit thereby.

As one of the means to this end, they have already introduced piece-work, and will do so to a still larger extent, when the price of labour has been increased by the shortening of the hours of toil. It is an undeniable fact, that the condition of the labouring class has grown worse as a consequence of piece-work. The price for piece-work is regulated according to the amount of work accomplished by the most skilled workers. Now each one will exert himself in order to keep even with his fellow-work-men and to make good wages. In this manner more and more work is being done for steadily decreasing wages. The result of piecework continued under an eight-hour system would be to completely nullify the aim of the movement, namely to give the two hours of toil gained thereby to those now idle.

It is therefore necessary that we not only demand the introduction of the eight hour workday, but also endeavour to abolish piece-work.

It is evident, that by the introduction of the eight hour workday and abolition of piece-work, the working class does not secure all the rights which belong to it, the



creator of all wealth. It will not abolish the existing wrongs; the means of production will still be in the hands of the few – the capitalists – who will use the same for their benefit and to the detriment of the people.

The labouring class will not be free from the existing state of misery and want, until the means of life, the land, the means of production. etc., have become the property of the people.

Then there will be no ruling and no ruled class, no possessing and no starving class, but only a class of workers enabled to enjoy life.

Therefore, workingmen, organise and fight the present capitalistic system. If you are willing to do so, it is of importance that you should not hesitate. And still today the working classes rather support this system than battle against it.

For instance, you pay moneys and dues to churches and support the preacher, who praises this damnable system of society as an institution created by God.

Therefore, workingmen, away from the church and organise.

Many of you also subscribe for and read capitalistic papers, and thereby nourish the serpent on your own breast. Is it not evident to you, that a press that is dependent on capital, will always praise the existing order of things and endeavour to conceal the evils attending it.

Don't you notice the News, Tribune, "Staatszeitung," "Freie Presse" and the rest of the capitalistic newspapers misrepresent everything that concerns you. Don't you see that whenever they speak of lockouts, strikes, etc., they call the idle, hungry workingmen: Tramps, mob, loafers. etc.?

Are you not aware of the fact, that the News and other capitalistic papers refuse to accept and publish boycott resolutions; yes, even refuse to publish corrections of false reports about strikes, although being offered pay therefore.

Workingmen, join the unions of your resp. trades and with them join the Central Labor Union.

If there is no organisation of your trade in existence, apply to the Central Labor Union, 54 W. Lake St. and organise one with its assistance. Organised you can introduce the eight hour workday, abolish the abominable piece-work, and thereby take the first step to your emancipation. Shun the preachers and the capitalistic press and subscribe for and read your own organ here in Chicago, the "Arbeiter-Zeitung" and "Alarm," and make war upon the existing miserable state of affairs and secure your rights and independence.

**The Committee of the Central Labor Union**



# Albert R. Parsons

## The International

### Albert R. Parsons

*The Alarm*, 4 April 1885

If it be true as lately asserted by many, that the communist anarchists known as the (Black) International, have decided upon a vigorous warfare against Trades unions as an important branch of their tactics, it is much to be regretted. Such a course of action would not only be economically unsound but is suicidal as well – *Labor Enquirer*

The ALARM takes pleasure in setting its contemporary, from whose columns the above extract is taken, right on the attitude of the International Working Peoples' Association towards Trades unions. We have ourselves observed paragraphs of a similar nature floating around through the labour press, and we gladly avail ourselves of this opportunity to answer the charge. The Communist Anarchists or Internationalists, as our organisation is alternatively called, have on some occasions found it necessary to criticise adversely the tactics, propaganda and aims of some Trades unions. In Chicago, not long since, the Trades assembly was challenged to a "joint debate" upon the subject of the relations of capital and labour, and the most practical method to achieve labour's economic emancipation, the International holding adverse views to those of the Trades assembly.

These facts taken together have, with the aid of ignorant or designing leaders, who seem to be actuated in the matter by a desire for "place and fame," been taken up and an attempt made to create a false impression with regard to the International.

However, in order to place the matter fairly before our contemporaries of the Trades Unions it will be necessary to publish in this connection the action of the Pittsburgh Congress held in October 1883, where the following resolution was adopted as the official declaration of the International upon that subject, viz:

WHEREAS. We view in Trades Unions based upon progressive principles, the abolition of the wages system, the cornerstone of a better societary structure than the present one, and



**Albert R. Parsons  
(1848-1887)**

WHEREAS. Furthermore, these Trades Unions are an army of despoiled and disinherited brothers, who are destined to overthrow the present economic system for the purpose of free universal co-operation, be it

*Resolved.* That we, the International Working Peoples' Association, extend to them our brotherhood and our aid in their struggle against the ever-growing despotism of private capital, and

*Resolved.* That while we are in full sympathy with such progressive unions, we will attack and seek to destroy all those organisations who stand upon reactionary principles, since they are the enemies of the cause of labour's emancipation and a detriment to humanity and progress.

The International recognises in the Trades Unions the embryonic group of the future "free society." Every Trades Union is, *nolens volens*,<sup>1</sup> an autonomous commune in the process of incubation. The Trades Union is a necessity of capitalistic production, and will yet take its place by superseding it under the system of universal free co-operation. No, friends, it is not the unions but the methods which some of them employ, with which the International finds fault, and as indifferently as it may be considered by some, the development of capitalism is hastening the day when all Trades Unions and Anarchists will of necessity become one and the same.

P.

<sup>1</sup> Whether willing or not. (*Black Flag*)

# What Anarchy Means

Albert R. Parsons

*The Alarm*, 7 March 1885

The manifesto of the Pittsburgh Congress of the International Working People's Association issued October 16, 1883, concludes as follows:

What we would achieve is, therefore, plainly and simply:

First: Destruction of the existing class rule, by all means, i.e., by energetic, relentless, revolutionary, and international action.

Second: Establishment of a free society based upon co-operative organisation of production.

Third: Free exchange of equivalent products by and between the productive organisations without commerce and profit-mongery.

Fourth: Organisation of education on a secular, scientific, and equal basis for both sexes.

Fifth: Equal rights for all without distinction to sex or race.

Sixth: Regulation of all public affairs by free contracts between the autonomous (independent) communes and associations, resting on a federalistic basis.

Whoever agrees with this ideal let him grasp our outstretched brother hands!

Proletarians of all countries, unite!

Fellow workingmen, all we need for the achievement of this great end is organisation and unity!

The above declaration sets forth the aims and methods of the Anarchists, so-called. It is, therefore, a matter of surprise to hear some persons say that Anarchists are without design or purpose.

We often hear it asked, "What does Anarchy mean?" It means first, the destruction of the existing class domination. Until this is accomplished reform or improvement in any direction in the interests of the proletariat is an impossibility. All the ills that afflict mankind are summed up in one word – *poverty* – resulting from unnatural causes. Remove this barrier

from the pathway and the march of progress will be steady and rapid toward the highest forms of civilisation. Poverty, therefore, is the great curse of man.

The domination of classes arises from privileges acquired first by force and chicane, and then enacted into statute law, and made legal by a constitution. Through this process the means of existence, without the use of which life cannot be maintained; land, machinery, transportation, communication, etc., have been made *private property* – monopolised – until only

a few privileged persons in society possess the right to live in liberty. The propertyless, the wage class, are compelled to seek for bread and shelter of those who possess property. Out of this compulsion arises the slavery and poverty of the wealth-producers. The private property system is a despotism under which the propertyless are forced, under penalty of starvation, to accept whatever terms or conditions the propertied may dictate. To remove this system is the first and paramount aim of Anarchy, and for its accomplishment a resort to any and all means became not a duty but a

necessity. The ballot-box has ceased long since to record the popular will, for he who must sell his labour or starve, will sell his vote also, when the same alternative is presented. The class who control the industries and the wealth of the country can and do control its votes. Education becomes impossible under the drudgery and poverty of wage-slavery, and of itself can make no change. The International recognises that the man of labour is held *by force* in economic subjection to the monopolisers of the means of labour, the resources of life, and that from this source arises the mental degradation, the political dependence and social misery of the working class.

The proletariat being no longer able to live except in slavery, and a large portion of them denied even that choice, the revolutionary movement becomes an absolute necessity. This revolutionary movement consisting of the discontented and starving proletariat, is organised into an irresistible power by those men of the

**The state and its laws server only to perpetuate the existing class rule, and once overthrown, upon its ruins Anarchy would place a "free society based upon the co-operative organisation of production."**

wage class who have a historical insight into the labour movement and the outcome of the social revolution.

There are educated men of the middle class, who, seeing the approaching conflict, or having been themselves crushed out by the weight of competition and forced into the ranks of the proletariat, become active and useful members in organising the elements of discontent.

The state and its laws server only to perpetuate the existing class rule, and once overthrown, upon its ruins Anarchy would place a "free society based upon the co-operative organisation of production." This free society would be purely economic in its character, dealing only with the production and distribution of wealth. The various occupations and individuals would voluntarily associate to conduct the processes of distribution and production. The shoemakers, carpenters, farmers, printers, moulders and others would form autonomous or independent groups or communities, regulating all affairs to suit their pleasure. The Trades' Union, Assemblies and other labour organisations are but the initial groups of the free society.

Freedom of exchange between the productive organisations without commerce or profit-mongery would then take the place of the existing speculative system with its artificial scarcity and plundering "corners."

Education would be placed within the reach of all.

Equal rights would exist for all. No rights without duties, no duties without rights.

All public affairs would be regulated by free contracts between the autonomous (independent) communes or groups, resting on a federalistic basis.

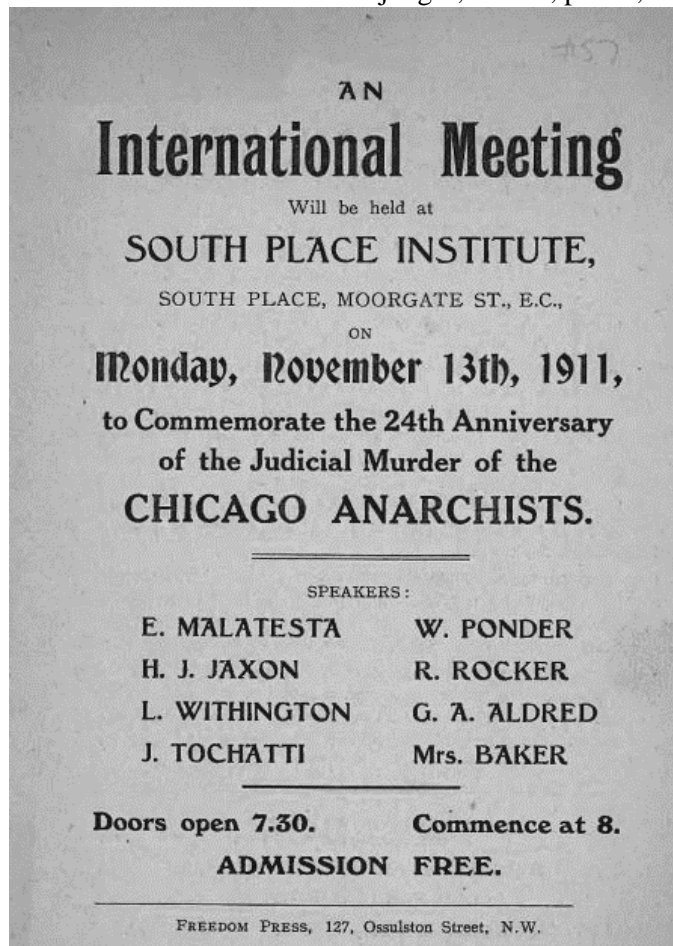
The free Society is the abrogation of all forms of political government. The useless classes, lawyers, judges, armies, police, and the innumerable hordes

engaged in buying, selling and advertising their wares, would disappear. Reason and common sense based upon natural law, takes the place of statute law, with its compulsion and arbitrary rules.

Capital, being a *thing*, can have no rights. Persons alone have rights. The existing system bestows all capital upon one class and all labour upon the other; hence the conflict is irrepressible. The time has now arrived when the labourers must possess the right to the free use of the capital with which they work, or the capitalists will own the labourers, body and soul. No compromise is possible. We must choose between freedom and slavery. The International defiantly unfurls the banner of liberty, fraternity,

equality, and beneath its scarlet folds beckons the disinherited of earth to assemble and strike down the property beast which feasts upon the life-blood of the people.

*Vive la Revolution Sociale.*



## Anarchy

**Albert R. Parsons**

*The Alarm*, 16 May 1885

Anarchy is the negation or absence of *force*. The existing social conditions are founded upon and maintained by force. Governments are the agencies by which constitutions and statute laws are enforced and executed. Anarchy is the reverse of statute law and constitutions; it is the sovereignty of the individual regulated by natural law alone.

Natural law differs from statute law in that the former is to be discovered, while the latter is manufactured to

order. A statue law is an absurdity, since it is a confession that nature is either unwilling or unable to point out the better way for man's existence. Statute law is the assumption that mankind is unwilling or unfit to be free, and hence must have a ruler or governor, whose business it is to tell him what he must or must not, or what he shall or shall not do. The bare-faced villainy of such a claim and the infamy of its enforcement is at

P.

once apparent when we inquire who is to manufacture the law and do the governing?

All political parties are based upon the idea that the people rule, but all experience and common sense demonstrates that the people do not rule. The people do not govern themselves for the sole reason that they cannot, and they cannot because of the recognised “authority” of this thing called government. The masses – the proletariat – are hindered from ruling themselves or doing whatsoever they may consider to their own best interests by the government. It is “unlawful” for the unemployed to employ themselves. It is “unlawful” for the homeless, the hungry and destitute to apply their natural forces to the forces of nature and supply themselves with whatever they may need or desire. It is “unlawful” to refuse to recognise the right of the privileged class to deny these opportunities to the proletariat. It is “unlawful” to refuse to be a slave, a bondsman, an outcast, a pariah in our social system. To deny these powers of government is to be an outlaw, subject to imprisonment, punishment and death at the hands of the government.

By the trick of politics the producers have been led in the past to believe that they are themselves responsible

for their unhappy conditions. They were told that they possessed the right to a choice of rulers and law manufacturers. But they begin to see that a choice of goalers or masters is a very poor recompose for loss of one’s liberty. Self-government is the reverse of all political government. Where the people rule, government dies. Left to themselves the people govern themselves, and government, political or otherwise, becomes unnecessary and impossible.

When the people unite and disunite freely without let or hindrances in the prosecution of their daily affairs, government and statute law will disappear. Until that time humanity will be bossed, driven or robbed for the benefit of those who uphold “authority,” government and the statute law. All governments are for the rich, of the rich and by the rich, to rob, enslave and destroy the poor. Anarchy, therefore, seeks the destruction of all government and all law, civil and criminal, by and with any and all means, and the International Working People’s Association is consecrated to the work of the social revolution, the destruction of class rule and privilege by revolutionary, energetic, relentless and international action. *Vive la An-archie!*

P.

## Typographical Unions

**Albert R. Parsons**

*The Alarm*, 13 June 1885

The chief organiser of the International Typographical Union in a circular setting forth the objects of typographical unions says:

Unions place all men on an equal footing – no discrimination is tolerated. They are equally as just to those that employ union men as they are just to one another. There is no occasion for a war between employer and employee. Unions grant to employers all they are entitled to, and exact from them nothing but justice.

The facts prove the above statement untrue. Many Trades unions and the printers unions in particular, keeps up and maintains inequality and discrimination among its own members. Now for the proof: It is a matter of record that for every printer holding a steady situation in Chicago (and the same rule applies all over the country) there is another printer, known as a “sub,” who does not get a chance to work more than two days each week on average, while about ten per cent of the whole craft are practically in enforced idleness all the time, unable to get any work at all. Is this what the “organizer” means by “an equal footing” and “no discrimination”. The union exacts dues, etc., from every member alike, from those who have steady work the same as those of its members who have unsteady and no work at all. Is this “equality” and fairness? True unionism says that “an injury to one is the concern of

all.” Is it not an injury, a grievous wrong, for one member to monopolise the work, and consequently the wages and bread of a trade to the exclusion of the right of any other member to his equal share of such work and wages? Is it not practically “taxation without representation” to exact dues from members and loyalty to an organisation which permits only a portion of them to enjoy the benefits thereof? Equality of rights carries with it equality of duties and privileges. Wage-workers can have no just ground for quarrel with those who exploit them – their employers – so long as they deny, on any pretext, the absolute and inalienable rights of every member of their own class, to life and liberty. And the union which says “there is no occasion for war between employer and employee,” and can see nothing wrong in the wage system, which places the worker’s life and liberty at the disposal of any and every employer, cannot be expected to do justice with each other among themselves. Such a union is no union at all; it is a mere makeshift, a place where cliques, rings and selfish schemes are fostered, and it becomes an instrument for the hopeless enslavement of the worker to his capitalistic master. The aspiring politicians and would-be capitalists inside the unions are alone responsible for the failure of the union.

P.

# Selfishness

Albert R. Parsons

*The Alarm*, 27 June 1885

“You cannot introduce Socialism, because men are too selfish,” is the objection often heard made against the adoption of the co-operative principle of production and exchange. A little reflection, however, will enable one to perceive that Socialism will be the final product of the social revolution, because men are selfish. When it is remembered that the working people are so *un*-selfish as to permit a few members of society – capitalists – to own and control all the means of existence and by process of profit, interest and rent derive vast incomes and wealth from the labour of the propertyless workers, it will appear that Socialism has far more reason to dread *un*-selfishness on the part of working people than otherwise; and were it not for the fact that nature will and must assert itself through the law of “self-preservation” the advent of the “free society” would be indefinitely postponed. But failing to peacefully obtain their natural right to life and liberty from those who now withhold them, the wage-slaves will through sheer necessity – *selfishness* – take by force the means of existence and hold them for the sole use and benefit of the whole people. Selfishness will yet become the saviour of the liberties and happiness of the people.

P.

## The Wabash Strike

Albert R. Parsons

*The Alarm*, 22 August 1885

The Executive Committee of the Knights of Labor has ordered the members of the organisation who are employees of the Wabash system of the railway west of the Mississippi river to quit working for that corporation until certain grievances are settled. This corporation has fixed a rate of wages unsatisfactory to its employees, and has notified them that it will not employ any one who belongs to the Knights of Labor, or any other labour organisation. An attempt to adjust the differences by “arbitration” on behalf of the Knights of Labor, has been contemptuously rejected by the officials of the Wabash system.

This action of the corporation had compelled the Knights of Labor to choose between the alternative of submission or resistance. They have chosen the latter, and the strike has been ordered. The contest will be watched with interest. If Knights of Labor obey and uphold the law which makes this railway system the private property of the syndicate; if they adhere to the doctrine of “law and order,” they must, perforce, offer only a passive resistance to the exactions of the corporation. The Wabash system will then, by virtue of its property rights, sustained by “law and order,” which are enforced by the government, hold the whip-handle on the strikers.

The corporation will choose one of two weapons against the strikers, viz.: Either by putting to work a large force of men who have been rendered destitute and helpless by enforced idleness, or by temporarily transferring its

freight to sympathetic lines and thus transform the strike into a lockout until hunger drives the strikers into submission. If the strikers resist these conditions, and offer violence to the corporation, the government will take up the fight for the syndicate.

Under the “private property” system the property-less have but one duty – submission! But one right – starvation!

It is useless for us to say that Anarchists sympathise with their fellow wage-slaves. But, unlike the Knights of Labor,

we hold that the Wabash system belongs by natural right to the workers who operate it, and that it is their bounden duty, yea, an imperative necessity to oust the robbers and slave-drivers who now hold it as their private property; to expropriate the appropriators!

The right to live is contingent upon the right to the free use of the means of life. But that right can never be acquired short of Revolution! Knights of Labor, unfurl the Red Flag!

P

# Anarchy vs. Government

Albert R. Parsons

*The Alarm*, 22 August 1885

Anarchy, from the Greek words An – no, Archie – government – meaning no government, is the denial of the right of coercion, of authority; Anarchy, therefore, is the abrogation of statute law and constitution, by means of which man governs his fellow man.

Government, on the other hand, is the assertion of force, of authority, of rulership. The plea made for government is that man, being wicked, cruel, and debased, government is necessary in order to compel what is right and prevent what is wrong. On these grounds the necessity of government is maintained, and it is claimed that when government fails to do this it is because it is in the hands of wicked and corrupt men who pervert it, and abuse the power conferred upon them by diverting it from its true intent.

The “free society” which Anarchy would establish is maintained on an entirely different theory. Anarchists claim that under natural law, or in the absence of government and authority, men could not help but act right, since none would or could be protected in doing wrong; in other words, crime or the violation of natural rights would then bring its own punishment upon the perpetrator.

On the other hand we see that government steps in and regulates the affairs of society; it defines what is legal and therefore right, and what it prohibits is illegal, and therefore wrong. The moral standard in all matters is regulated by the government; yea, life and death is placed at its disposal. Under the rule of government one portion of society possesses power to dictate to the other, exacting service and compelling obedience to their mandates.

An-archie, or no government leaves man to the operations of natural law. It teaches that law is to be discovered, not manufactured; and that a happy life is only possible when we live in conformity with these laws. The reward – happiness; the penalty – misery.

Nor does it matter whether government be a monarchy, plutarchy, or democracy, the principle of coercion and authority which invades a man’s natural rights, is the

same, because if it is wrong for the one or the few to *rule* the many, how can it be right for the many to *rule* the few? To the Shibboleth “the greatest good to the greatest number,” Anarchy answers back “the greatest good *to all*”

In the absence of statutory and constitutional government, the price of peace is fair dealing,

**voluntary  
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product to the  
producers**

arbitration would take the place of courts of law (misnamed “justice”) and asylums for prisons; voluntary associations for the purpose of co-operative production in the place of wage-slavery; the principle of reciprocity by means of free exchange of equivalent for equivalent would succeed the governmental system of competition, profit-mongery and commerce. In the absence of authority the workshops would belong to the workers, the tools to the toilers, and the product to the producers; the means of existence, the resources of life would be the common heritage of the whole human race. Occupation and use would then be the sole and only title, because it is the only natural title. Under government, however, the

natural law is set aside by the statute. A statute law made in harmony with natural law is unless, because unnecessary, and one made in violation thereof is tyrannical and injurious. Government therefore, whether by majority or minority, is unnatural – wholly injurious. Natural law is mandatory, self-enforcing. Statute law requires all the paraphernalia of courts, jails, police, and armies – in short, government to enforce it.

If man is a product of nature, let nature be his friend, guide and ruler. Man-made law is of benefit and use to those only who would take and hold an advantage over their fellows. Government-is for slaves; freemen govern themselves. In the absence of law *all are free!*

P.

# Legislation

**Albert R. Parsons**

*The Alarm*, 17 October 1885

Every statute is designed solely to protect “private” property. Now, against whom is it necessary that property should be protected, or by whom is it endangered? Statute law answers this question. It defines the purpose of all law to be to designate the person or persons who are to possess and enjoy the right of property, therefore, necessitates government, because the power necessary to enforce its legislation can be obtained in no other way. Hence the watch-dogs, the guardians of property rights are always “the authorities,” so called.

All statutes are aimed against the laborers, consequently the labour movement is a protest against the existing mode of acquiring and holding property. It calls in question the existing right of proprietorship. This is of course treason against the state, since the state or government assumes the sole right – *the right of might* – to settle this question. The state assumes and exercises the power of omnipotence on questions of property rights.

The labour movement is therefore independent of and separate from the state. It maintains that property rights possess no virtue apart from personal rights. That individual rights are paramount and imperative because natural. The rights conferred by statute law are specific

and exclusive. Statute law creates classes – the privileged and the excluded; those who possess and enjoy property and those who are denied such possession and enjoyment. The labour movement is therefore a necessity arising out of legislation. Labour creates all wealth, while government deprives them of their product and bestows it upon profit-mongers, rent-takers and usury-gatherers. The workers are thus compelled by the first law, the natural law, the law of self-preservation to prepare for the abolition of government, the author of all their woes. The government and rulership of man by man is rendered possible by statute

law, and the exploitation of man by man is made impossible in the absence of government.

Government is for slaves; freemen govern themselves. In the absence of law – statute law – all are free and equal. Property rights – privilege – necessitates statute law and government. Personal right – liberty – destroys both. Government sacrifices men to save *things*. Anarchy uses all things to protect and save *men*. Every statute is designed to deprive the producer of the use of his product.

P.

# Pennsylvania

**Albert R. Parsons**

*The Alarm*, 6 February 4, 1886

## THE PARADISE OF THE LABOUR EXPLOITER THE HELL OF HIS MISERABLE VICTIM

### How the Wage-Slaves are Evicted, Locked Out, Imprisoned, Starved and Murdered

#### Natural Wealth, Artificial Poverty

Comrades: Since writing my last report in the *Alarm* I have spent ten days among the wage-slaves of Pennsylvania. One mass-meeting was held at Coal Center and another at Elizabeth, on the Monongahela river. Coal Center is located fifty miles above Pittsburgh, in the Monongahela valley. From Coal Center to Pittsburgh is one continuous coal mine of almost inexhaustible quantity. The country is beautiful with its valleys, mountains, and river, and is said by those who claim to know to be almost as picturesque as Switzerland. The soil is of the richest character; the great hills abound with coal, iron, stone, oil, natural gas. The river is navigable, and bounded on either side of its bank by a railroad. The climate is delightful and

healthy, the water pure. With all these natural conditions of abounding wealth which only requires the magic touch of labour’s hand it would be reasonable to expect that its inhabitants were prosperous and happy. But, alas for our boasted, so-called modern civilisation! Amid this unlimited natural wealth there is the most extreme poverty and intense misery, and what is true of this region I find to be the same deplorable condition wherever I go. In Alleghany City, a place of great wealth, and in Pittsburgh and elsewhere the gaunt faces of misery, hunger, and woe meet one on every hand. Pennsylvania is the richest State in the American Union, and Pittsburgh and the region around about is its centre. The invested capital of this State is mainly engaged in



employing labour at productive work. Here are the mines, mills, and factories. of America, and, of course, the class distinctions of wage-slaves and capitalistic masters, of proletariat and bourgeoisie, the most clearly visible and well-defined. Here the operations of the modern commercial system, which produces for profit only, holds supreme sway, and its effects upon the people are visible on every hand, viz.: the colossal wealth of the idle few, the agonising poverty of the industrious many. The system of private ownership and control of capital, which makes of the propertyless a dependent, hireling class, subjecting them to the selfish whims and greed of the privileged few who possess the *legal right* to own and control the labour product of the labourers, has full play in the "*common (?) wealth of Pennsylvania.*" Shoeless children, who dare not leave their miserable shanties, sometimes called "homes," to go to school or to work over the ice or through the snow, are to be seen everywhere. Thinly clad, emaciated, care-worn women, bowed down with drudgery and anxiety, meet you on all sides. Miserable, wretched, poverty-stricken men, young in years, stalwart in frame, yet old in gait and shrunken with misery, greet your eyes at every turn. Crammed and filled are the work-houses, prisons, poor-houses, police stations, charity societies, penitentiaries, and the "Potter's Field."

"Rattle their bones over the stones,  
They're only poor workmen whom nobody  
owns."

Look on that picture, then on this, viz.: Palatial mansions, everything that wealth can supply, licentious luxury, profligacy, idleness, and corruption among the "successful enterprisers" who have exploited, degraded, and enslaved their fellow-men.

There is fierce conflict, internal warfare on every side, raging between the privileged and disinherited. Strikes are met with lock-outs; bread riots are met with police clubs, bayonets, and gatling guns; the "pious fraud" plies his vocation and threatens the rebellious slaves with eternal damnation and the wrath of God when oppression compels them to disregard the "law and order" of their earthly masters; the poor-houses and prisons are filled with the unfortunates whose inability to find employment makes them objects of Governmental care, and dungeons and prison cells are crammed with wage-slaves who have "conspired" against starvation wages, and thus violated the "organic law" of the capitalistic system. Everything is done by *contract*. The labour exploiters prepare a "free contract" for their wage-slaves to sign as a condition precedent to employment, which they are at perfect liberty to sign or starve! And this "freedom of contract" is held inviolate by the courts and Judges of capitalism.

The report of the superintendent of the Bethel home in Pittsburgh, a semi-charitable institution where a bed or a meal can be had for 5 cents, made his annual report a

few days ago to the public that 25,276 tramps were provided for in this institution the past year. And only one institution heard from!

Ten thousand miners and coke-makers are on a strike for a 10 per cent. advance of their starvation wages in the Connellsville region, contiguous to this city, and the mine and coke czars have issued their ukas ordering them to vacate their tenements, and the police and militia are under arms, awaiting the word of command from the Government to evict the rebels, dispossess them of their miserable shanties at the point of a bayonet, and cast the helpless women and innocent children out into the snow. Shades of Irish landlordism! your blighting shadow has fallen upon America as well. First robbed and then evicted because they are dissatisfied with the robbers. And it is said that Americans are to be employed in the place of these ungrateful "foreigners." If the foreigner is no longer satisfied with the blessings of this "free country," why, the "American sovereign is to be employed in his place," say the capitalists. But will the experiment prove a success? May not American sovereigns and freemen also discover that patriotism is a very poor substitute for bread? We shall see.

The men at the Edgar Thompson steel works at Braddock, a Pittsburgh suburb, had to strike against twelve hours exhausting labour. What then? Over 100 men, armed with 14-repeating Winchester rifles, and about forty deputy Sheriffs, armed to the teeth, were employed by the company to preserve "law and order." These, with the aid of the Very-Rev. Father Hickey, of that place, induced the "ungrateful" wage-slaves to return to their slavery. Ungrateful, I say, because do not capitalists claim that they furnish the working class with bread, and that if it were not for them and their business enterprises the workers would starve! "The ungrateful wretches must be kept orderly and quiet," say the bosses.

The flood-gates of poverty have been turned loose. Hard times; no work; hard work and poor pay, describes the situation, and to maintain their legal right to control the natural rights of others the property-holding class are strengthening the police, increasing the army, recruiting the militia, building new jails, work-houses, poor-houses, and enlarging the penitentiaries. Entrenched behind "organic law," church and State, sustained by bayonets, maintain the supremacy of our capitalistic "law and order" regime.

Of course, the wage-slaves, the proletarians, are not indifferent to the conditions that surround them. They have massed their forces in labour organisations, principally the Knights of Labor and trades unions. But these labour organisations have built their house upon a foundation of sand, which the wind, rain, and storm of poverty now descending upon it will wash away. In fact, the foundation seems to be gone already, and the impending wreck of the whole structure is at hand. They



do not and cannot regulate the work-hours; they do not and cannot keep up wages or provide employment to the enforced idle. Any labour organisation which cannot do this for its members is of no value to them whatever. These organisations are at cross-purposes with themselves. They fight the effects of a system, but defend and protect the system itself. Result – failure.

Socialism is soon to become the trustee of these bankrupted capitalistic labour organisations, which are now being weighed in the balance and found wanting. Out of their ashes, Phoenix-like, will arise the new social regime. On their ruins Socialism will erect the mansions of “Liberty, Fraternity, Equality,” which shall endure forever, for Socialism gives homes to the homeless, land to the landless, liberty to the slave, wealth, happiness, and prosperity *to all!* Necessity, the mother of invention, will compel the wage-slaves of all nations to turn to Socialism as their only saviour.

At Coal Center, on the Monongahela river, we held successful and important mass-meetings of citizens and miners.

Before my arrival I was threatened with being rotten-egged and mobbed, so thoroughly and skilfully had the capitalistic politicians and priests worked up a sentiment of hatred toward the detested Anarchists. But it proved a boomerang to recoil upon themselves, for after the people heard me present the claims of Socialism they showed me every possible courtesy, taking me to the best tavern and paying for my board bill, and assuring me that they intended to send for me to return among them soon, when they would get the whole country around there to turn out and hear Socialism.

In Monongahela City no hall could be had for love or money, and hence no meeting, as the weather was too cold for an open-air address.

At Mansfield, Pa., myself and a few Pittsburgh comrades held a very well-attended mass-meeting among the citizens of that suburb. After my address an English miner rose and said that he was a God-fearing man and a Christian; that Socialism was Christianity. He had a family of six children, and his wages for the past two weeks’ work was \$4! I interrupted him to inquire if he had not made a mistake, when several other miners present corroborated what he said, and stated that some of them got even less than that sum. The English miner continued, and said that they were robbed unmercifully by false weight of coal and at the infamous truck stores. Said he: “I would rather die on the battle-field than to continue to live as I am.” He said he would join the International, but it was opposed to

God. Man suffered because of sin. God commanded us to work six days, but the bosses made us work seven in the week. All we had to do was to obey God and “love thy neighbour as thyself.”

This miner was told in reply that the command to work six days was absurd and impossible, because on certain portions of the earth the days were six months long.

That to obey God was certain slavery, for had he not said: “Servants, obey your masters and be obedient to those placed in authority over you”? And as for loving

one’s neighbour as one’s self, how could there be peace on earth and good will to those who were engaged in robbing and killing us? The English Government held its sway over Ireland because the Catholic church commanded obedience to the scriptures. The Irishman has the choice of obeying God and slavery, or disobedience and liberty. Which? To abandon the world to the robbers and seek a paradise beyond this life, among the unknown and unknowable, was to let

go the bird in the hand and chase the one in the bush. No doubt ministers of the gospel would be opposed to this earthly paradise, which an observance of nature’s law would give to all, because it would abolish sin and his occupation as a soul-saver would be gone.

The meeting was well received, but here, as elsewhere, the men are too poor, having been on long strikes and out of work and money, to subscribe for the *ALARM*.

Last Saturday evening in the Jane Street Turner hall, on the south side of Pittsburgh, a large mass-meeting greeted us in response to the following announcement made in hand-bills:

Workingmen’s mass-meeting at Turner hall, Jane street, S. S., to-night. The workingmen and citizens of the south side will hold an indignation meeting on Saturday evening, January 30, at 7:30 o’clock, to denounce the use of police and military to overawe strikers, and also to take action in regard to the introduction of labour-saving machinery in our iron, steel, and glass industries. Every workingman and woman should be present. Free discussion. Everybody invited.

*The Committee.*

The hall was filled, and, on motion, F. M. Gessner, editor of the *American Glass-Worker*, a weekly trade journal published in Pittsburgh, was made Chairman. He said, substantially:

**Socialism will erect the mansions of “Liberty, Fraternity, Equality,” which shall endure forever, for Socialism gives homes to the homeless, land to the landless, liberty to the slave, wealth, happiness, and prosperity *to all!***

“LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: No one seems disposed to introduce the gentleman who speaks to us to-night, but my courtesy to strangers bids me to do it. The workingmen of Pittsburgh should be here in thousands, but possibly because the victims of oppression in the coke regions now being driven into slavery at the bayonet point are Hungarians, there is prejudice against them. Well, be it so. So much the worse for us and our organisations that the cause of these people is ignored by us, and it is left for the hated and despised Anarchists and Socialists to step boldly to the front in their behalf. The unwelcome truth calls for heroes. The poor Hun is being crushed and only the hated Anarchist comes to his rescue. Are we doing our duty? Let the hated Anarchist roll his drum to-day, but in the long roll I believe our organisation will stand in line and every man answer ‘Aye.’ I am not here as an Anarchist, for I do not clearly yet understand their position. But the time has come for the utterance and acceptance of the truth, however unwelcome it may be to some. I ask your courteous attention to what Mr. Parsons, of Chicago, has to say.”

I discoursed to the audience for about two hours, and was cheered throughout to the echo, and at the conclusion of my speech the following resolutions were adopted unanimously by the large audience present, which was composed mainly of Americans:

*Resolved*, By this mass-meeting of workingmen of Pittsburgh, that the employment of police and militia to suppress strikes and compel working people to submit to starvation wages paid by monopolists and capitalists, as witnessed in the recent struggle of the miners on the Monongahela river, the rolling-mill men at Braddock, and the coke-workers of the Connellsville region and elsewhere, demonstrates that the employers of labour rely upon force to compel obedience to their dictation; it therefore becomes the bounden duty of all workingmen who value their life, liberty, and happiness to arm and prepare themselves to successfully resist the oppressions of their capitalistic masters.

*Resolved*, That the monopolistic or private control of recent inventions in labour-saving machinery, together with the use of natural gas in the manufacture of iron, steel, and glassware, has destroyed the means of subsistence of tens of thousands of wage-workers by rendering their labour superfluous; therefore, it is our bounden duty, in order to live and enjoy liberty, to take the means of human subsistence out of the control and ownership of private individuals and place them where they by natural right

belong, viz.; into the hands of society for the free use of all, thus destroying forever the monopolistic system of private capital in the means of life, which breeds the curse of poverty, ignorance, intemperance, disease, crime, and vice.

*Resolved*, That it is the conviction of this mass-meeting that the time has arrived when the workingmen of America must arise and proclaim, and maintain by any and all means, their inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

I cannot close this brief report without calling attention to Pennsylvania, and Pittsburgh, its industrial centre, as the natural cradle of the social revolution. Here, as nowhere else in America, the growth and development of the capitalistic system of mass-production has prepared the way by precept and example for the transition from the old to the new civilization. All the conditions exist for the rapid and stalwart growth of the revolutionary *proletariat*. There is but one thing lacking, viz.: *leaders*. The trades unions and Knights of Labour have organized the wage-workers for amelioration, which can never come. The leaders of these bodies are still chasing the *ignis fatuus* of politics, and the further they go the deeper they sink into the quagmire of the political swamp, until the cry already comes out of the gloom: “Help, help!” It is my deliberate judgment that one-half the talent, energy, and means expended in Pittsburgh that has been in Chicago would give the revolutionary movement ten members where it now has one. But unfortunately the Socialistic propaganda here has neither an American, German, or other organiser and agitator; no press, and consequently but little vitality. The harvest is great, but the harvesters are few. There is great probability of another trades union riot here like that of 1877. These are the inevitable social eruptions which make Socialism a necessity.

Group No. 1 has arranged for a festival in commemoration of the Paris Commune, to be held in Allegheny City Turner Hall the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March next. The members are practicing for presentation on the stage of a play descriptive of the German peasant war at the time of Martin Luther. The affair promises to be a grand success.

To the American, German, Russian, and other comrades, all of whom have laboured with me in the work of the Socialistic propaganda during my stay here; and have ever shown concern for my personal comfort, I salute with Anarchist good-bye.

I leave here today for Canton, Ohio, thence to Massillon, Mansfield, Columbus, Hocking Valley, Springfield, Ohio., and back to Chicago. *Salut*.

A.R. Parsons  
Pittsburgh, Pa.

# Ohio

## Albert R. Parsons

*The Alarm, 20 February 1886*

### AMERICAN SOVEREIGNS (?) FREEMEN AND VOTERS

#### Who Have Neither Homes, Work, Money

#### The Wage Slave

COMRADES. Since my last report in *THE ALARM* I have addressed several large mass-meetings of working people in the State of Ohio. Two mass-meetings were held in Canton on Friday and Saturday, February 5 and 6.

Canton is a railroad centre and manufacturing town of about 20,000 inhabitants, in Stark county, which rates third in the list of the wealthiest counties in the State of Ohio. Nevertheless, right here in the midst of this superabundance of wealth, strong men, their wives and children, are homeless, starving, and freezing. Bear in mind, Canton is located in the third wealthiest county of this State; its soil is unsurpassed; its coal, stone, water, natural gas exists in unlimited quantities and unsurpassed qualities; the climate the most healthy – yet, in the presence of this natural wealth, we find in this little city 200 families of able-bodied men to whom, being compelled to be idle, the authorities have to give charity to prevent them from begging, stealing, or starving! Five hundred other families of strong, healthy men are kept in enforced idleness and receive aid in one form or another from churches, clubs, friends, neighbours, etc., etc.

Allowing five persons to a family, we find that Canton, with its 20,000 inhabitants, has 3,500 human beings who have been made mendicants and paupers and are being driven into vagabondage and crime, prostitution and suicide by means of our industrial system. Let me give one or two detailed facts with which the writer is personally acquainted. At the iron and steel works in Canton the man who fires six boilers and regulates the steam in them tells me that he is kept spinning like a top for ten to twelve hours each day, doing this work in person, and that the least oversight on his part would cause an explosion of the boilers that would kill at least forty or fifty of the 200 men employed in the mill. For the performance of this exhaustive labour and grave responsibility he receives the sum of 12½ cents per hour!

In the midst of the terrible blizzards and snow I saw little 4 and 5-year-old girls, clad in thin and tattered garments, scraping the snow with their fingers among the railroad tracks where engines are constantly switching to and fro, hunting for nuggets of coal which may have dropped from passing trains! While here I read in the capitalistic press of the town that an unemployed workman, driven to desperation, dashed a

stone through a plate-glass window in a store on a principal business street, and, waiting till an officer of the law arrested him, he gave as a reason that he was out of work, money, and friends, and adopted this plan to keep from freezing and starving to death! But enough. I might add much more, but space forbids.

Two very large mass-meetings were held here. The first one was addressed by myself; the second by Comrades Louis Kirchner, of Canton, and Christ. Saam, of Cleveland, in German, and myself in English. The utterances of the speakers were loudly applauded. Several new members to the American and German Groups were obtained, besides many subscribers to the *ALARM*, *Vorbote*, *Freiheit*, and *Parole*.

From Canton I went to Massillon, a manufacturing and mining town of about 12,000 population. Here I found one-half of the working people in compulsory idleness, and one-third of the whole number of mendicants living on charity, credit, etc. A large meeting greeted me at this place. For over two hours the most undivided attention was given to the presentation of the causes which make paupers of those whose industry creates all wealth.

Owing to the long-continued enforced idleness the “strike” trouble has been solved, viz.: the workers no longer have a chance to “strike.”

Here is located the celebrated Russell & Co. harvester and reaper factory and machine foundry, employing several hundred men. Conspicuous on one of the folding doors at the entrance of this capitalistic pen of wage-slaves is posted a large bill, printed in very large letters, to-wit:

“Vote for Garfield and Arthur, and our protective tariff and good wages.

“Hancock and English are pledged to support a low-revenue tariff, which means little work and low wages, and for the benefit of the cotton aristocrats of the Solid South and British manufacturers.”

This electioneering bill is eight years old. But it tells its own story. The 1,000 American sovereigns, freemen, and voters at work in this capitalistic slave-pen “took the hint” and acted accordingly. Never was there better practical demonstration of the truth that patriotism is the greatest of all humbugs, a sentiment believed in only by

fools and nurtured only by knaves. This factory is “the pride” of this little capitalistic town; it does a large business in steam engines and other machinery. This week two lately invented moulding machines have been introduced into the foundry, each of which does the work of twenty moulders, rendering their labour superfluous and reducing their wages to zero! Alas for the American sovereign, freeman, and voter, about whom our trades union and other conservative labour organisations prate so much! Right in this establishment I found “American *free-men*” who said they were afraid to attend a public meeting of working men for *fear* of discharge. Freemen indeed! Let me say that my readers must not imagine that Russell & Co.’s is the only “slave-pen.” No, no. All capitalistic institutions are precisely alike in their operations. They all exploit and degrade the wealth-producers.

At Navarre, a mining town of 3,000 people, the “skating rink” had been secured for the “Anarchist” speaker to address the people in. This town is located on the Tuscarawa river, in a beautiful valley, through which passes a railroad. The soil of the surrounding country is of unsurpassed fertility; the hills abound in coal, iron, stone, and gas. But to what a sad plight has the capitalistic system of wage-slavery brought the American labourer! A miner tells me that the 500 or 600 miners living here were permitted to work about one-third time the past year. This miner said his family consisted of a wife and three children. His wages the past year amounted to \$89.76. Rent was \$5 per month; powder for 120 tons of coal which he dug was \$15.75; three gallons of oil was \$3; sharpening tools was 50 cents; total expense for rent, powder, oil, and tools, \$79.25; balance left for food and clothes, \$10.51! This allows less than one-fourth of a cent per day for food and clothes. “Incredible!” you say. Talk of the Chinese, the pauper labour of Europe, but these American sovereigns can discount them. “How did he live?” you ask. Well, in this way. The country round about is the richest farming land in the world. The rich farmers who own it find in these poverty-stricken miners an unfailing supply of cheap labor, paying for odd jobs and a few days’ work in the harvest season the sum of 50 cents per day! Sometimes they only give what a hungry man can eat in return for a day’s hard work. A miner told me that he had to buy on credit in the year 1884 \$5 worth of potatoes from a rich farmer. Last year (1885) he had no money to pay the debt, and told the farmer he would

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work it out. He worked four days, over twelve hours per day, and finished the job. He asked the farmer to let him have a few bushels of potatoes again on credit, as he had no money, when he was informed that not until he paid what was owing last year could he get any more. The miner replied that he thought his work had paid the debt. The farmer said: “No, sir; you owe me \$2.80 yet,” and the miner could get no more potatoes.

The wage-slaves of America have to pay such high prices for coal that many of them are forced to stint themselves in the use of it, while the miner is freezing and starving also. This is the Legislative district from which Hon. (?) John McBride, labour politician, member of the Ohio Legislature, and President of the Ohio State Miners’ Association, hails. As well might the herd of sheep appeal to the wolves for protection, as for the despoiled workers to look to the statute books for redress.

I found hearty greeting in Navarre. The “rink” was crowded, and the brass band, consisting of fourteen instruments performed by miners, regaled the people with some choice selections of music. The meeting was

attended by the priest, banker, and lawyer, and none could or would deny the truths of Socialism. A large American Group was formed and many subscribers obtained for the *ALARM*.

From Navarre I went to Mansfield, the home of John Sherman, Ohio’s member of the American House of Lords, sometimes called the Senate. Ohio’s John has, by strict economy, industry, and sobriety during his term of office the past twenty years, on a salary of \$5,000 per annum, amassed a handsome little sum for a “rainy day” during his old age, which amounts to several million dollars. Thrifty, industrious, sober John, you have reaped the reward of the good, the virtuous, and the true! Successful statesman, you have amassed millions out of the stolen product of the American wage-slave, while at the same time making your victim believe that you were his benefactor. But Democrats and Republicans vie with each other in playing the role of the statesman; that is, the manufacture of the coward’s weapon, the tool of the thief – statute law! In spite of the air of American “patriotism,” now descended to jingoism, which pervades the atmosphere of Mansfield, the streets were lined with American sovereigns in

compulsory idleness, who have no where to lay their weary heads.

In Columbus, the capital of Ohio, made such by the fact that the state “law factory” is located here, we have held three very successful mass-meetings in the city hall, a large and costly structure.

The first mass-meeting was held Friday evening, February 12, one on Saturday evening, the third being held on Sunday afternoon in the city hall at 2:30 o’clock. The audiences were quite large and intelligent. They expressed hearty approbation of what they heard, and a large, intelligent, and resolute American Group of the International was organised.

Columbus is the place where Ohio’s law-factory is located, and in which the politicians of the State are hunting for jobs. Here are to be found many institutions, the offspring of statute law, the most noteworthy of which is the State’s prison, or penitentiary. The Legislature, or law-factory, produces and renders penitentiaries necessary, for there must be some place to provide for those outcasts the statute law manufactures.

It is estimated by those who ought to know that fully one-half of the wage-workers of this city are out of employment. There was never before such destitution among the people. Able-bodied men seek in vain for an opportunity to work and provide their families with the necessities of life. On every hand there is unoccupied land, empty houses, and idle machinery, while on every side there is the landless, homeless, starving multitude. What but statute law has disinherited these people? Does not the State Trades Assembly of Ohio deserve the title of capitalistic labour organisation when at its recent convention, held in this city, it refused to *take* eight hours, but instead referred the matter to the Legislature and petitioned the labour robbers to give it to them, “if they please”?

Meanwhile the capitalistic system extorts its pound of flesh, from the quivering heart of the disinherited. The wealth of the wealthy grows constantly; the poverty of the poor increases all the while.

The statistics of Ohio, taken from the United States census for 1880, show that in manufactures the invested

capital was \$47,000,000 larger in 1880 than in 1870, while the number of manufacturing establishments was 2,070 less in 1880 than in the year 1870. On the other hand, the number of wage-workers employed in manufacture in Ohio was 46,407 larger in 1880 than in 1870. Wages were \$20 less on the average in 1880 than in 1870.

Thus we see the workings of the monopolistic system of interest, profit, and rent in the fact that under the workings of the economic law of capitalism in the State of Ohio in ten years the number of manufactories diminished 10 per cent., invested capital increased 25 per cent., and the number of wage-workers employed was increased 25 per cent., thus reducing the number of the rich but increasing the number of the poor; and while wages decreased profits increased, thus increasing the wealth of the wealthy and the poverty of the poor. This is the working, the unavoidable result of the capitalistic system. What will it lead to?

Socialism answers, viz.: The hopeless enslavement and impoverishment of the wage-class, who will be forced to take up arms and destroy the domination of the privileged class, putting an end forever to all man-made laws, governments or edicts. The turning of humanity loose, where all will be equally free and freely equal. The free society in which the natural law alone operates; that condition of society described by Thomas Paine, when he declared that all that was needed was the law of reciprocity, a common interest providing a common security.

It is coming; yes hastening on. The economic forces are at work incessantly, generating the forces of the Social revolution. We can neither retard nor hasten the result, but we can aid and direct its forces. Let us ever be on the alert, for our life, our liberty and happiness are at stake.

*Vive la revolution Sociale!*

A.R. PARSONS

P.S. – I go to Hocking Valley this week, thence to Jacksonville and Springfield, Ohio.

## **The Church**

**Albert R. Parsons**

*The Alarm*, 20 March 1886

A very slight knowledge of the facts of history, as well as the current events of the day will prove to anyone that the church has always allied itself with the kings and rulers of the people, whether political, military or financial, when the issue was one between the oppressed and their oppressors. On the continent of Europe the church has always and does now uphold the “Divine right” of the capitalistic pirates to rule, rob, and murder people. In America the church upheld and maintained the sacredness of chattel slavery for over a century, and all over the world today the church officially and as an organisation defends the “sacred right” of capitalists to hold and keep their wage-slaves in economic bondage.

# Expropriation

Albert R. Parsons

*The Alarm*, 20 March 1886

Expropriation! What a world of meaning does this word convey. It is a word almost unknown because unused. It is a word, however, yet destined to imprint itself most indelibly upon the affairs of mankind and stand out most prominently upon the page of history.

Expropriation! of what? The world and all it contains has been appropriated and is now held by a few, who enjoy the fruits of the labours of the many. Land, air, light and water is appropriated. Steam, electricity and machinery is appropriated. Food, clothing and shelter is appropriated. The means of transportation, of communication, all the implements of labour, in short, capital – the resources of life – the joint product of the efforts of industry of past and present generations is appropriated – monopolized – and withheld from humanity, by a privileged class who are thereby enabled to live in idleness and riot in luxury upon the toil and privation of the dispossessed many. This is the crime of appropriation. A cunning few hold usurped and arbitrary power under the sanction of church and

protection of government. The disinherited wage-slaves of earth are forced, under penalty of privation and death, to obey the commands of those appropriators of human subsistence.

There is an awakening. The day of restitution, of reclamation, of *expropriation* draws nigh. Man's natural inheritance and inalienable birth-right is soon to be no longer bought and sold, but is to be held in perpetuity by all for the free use of all.

Read and carefully ponder the words of our comrade, Pierre Krapotkine, published on another page.<sup>1</sup>

Speed the day of expropriation; the emancipation of labour from drudgery and poverty; the on-coming of the earthly paradise, where none can call another "master", where all live for each and each for all.

Expropriate the appropriators!

P.

# The Knights of Labor

Albert R. Parsons

*The Alarm*, 3 April 1886

For the past three weeks the great battle for bread has been fought by the wage-slaves of the Jay Gould railway system of the southwest. All eyes have been riveted upon the conflict, and with the reports of each day's struggle the hopes and fears of millions of sympathetic wage-workers have rose and fell.

The battle has been bravely fought inch by inch, but the workers have been overcome in spite of all. Capital entrenched behind legal privilege comes out of the conflict triumphant.

The vantage ground was all in favour of capital. The workers had to content with all the legal forms, superstitions and prejudices and customs of the past.

The whole affair, however, will be productive of untold benefit to the workers in the end.

The strike resulted in settling many heretofore disputed points. It has established beyond gainsay of indifferent wage-slaves or hypocritical labour exploiters that in America there is a raging conflict between capitalists

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and laborers. The acknowledgement of this fact by all will have much to do with the relative positions of the parties to the dispute in the future and in furnishing an intelligent perception of the issue.

The Knights of Labor and Trades unions have been

dislodged from their position that capital as private property has interests identical with the propertyless laborers. They have been forced to learn in the school of experience that arbitration is a failure where one party possesses the acknowledged right to compel submission

<sup>1</sup> The text – the third part of the chapter entitled "Expropriation" in *Words of a Rebel* – can be found in *Black*

*Fag Anarchist Review* Volume 3 No. 1 (Spring 2023). (*Black Flag*)

of the other on penalty of starvation! They have now discovered that private capital hedged about by laws and constitutions, enforced by the civil and military arms of the state is all-powerful to enforce its decrees upon those who concede its legal or legitimate rights to do so. They have learned that while the public – that intangible but all powerful force – may give its sympathies, it will nevertheless withdraw them if its interests are encroached upon; that the true policy in the future is *not to stop* the wheels of transportation and communication of production and exchange, but on the

contrary, *take charge of and run these institutions in the interests of the whole country!* In other words instead of allowing their capitalistic masters to discharge them; they must at all hazards and by any and all means *discharge their masters.*

These are some of the lessons taught by this great strike. May the wage-slaves of America profit by them and prepare for the fast approaching struggle which is to decide for all time whether or not the producers of the world's wealth are to remain slaves or be forever free!

P.

## Parsons' Plea for Anarchy

Albert R. Parson

New York *Herald*, 30 August 1886

So much is written and said nowadays about socialism or anarchism, that a few words on this subject from one who holds to these doctrines may be of interest to the readers of your great newspaper.

Anarchy is the perfection of personal liberty or self-government. It is the free play of nature's law, the abrogation of the statute. It is the negation of force or the domination of man by man. In the place of the law maker it puts the law discoverer and for the driver, or dictator, or ruler, it gives free play to the natural leader. It leaves man free to be happy or miserable, to be rich or poor, to be mean or good. The natural law is self-operating, self-enacting, and cannot be repealed, amended or evaded without incurring a self-imposed penalty. The statute law is license. Anarchy is liberty. The socialistic or anarchistic programme leaves the people perfectly free to unite or disunite for the purpose of production and consumption. It gives absolute freedom of contract by and between individuals or associations, and places the means of life – capital – at the disposal of the people. To those persons who may regard these aspirations as merely sentimental or utopian, I invite their attention to the operation of our capitalistic system, as outlined by Marx and others.<sup>1</sup>

The capitalist system originated in the forcible seizure of natural opportunities and rights by a few, and

converting these things into special privileges, which have since become vested rights formally entrenched behind the bulwarks of statute law and government. Capital could not exist unless there also existed a class, a majority class, who are propertyless – that is, without capital. A class whose only mode of existence is by selling their labour to capitalists. Capitalists maintained, fostered and perpetuated by law. In fact, capital is law, statute law, and law is capital.

Labour is a commodity, and wages is the price paid for it. The owner of the commodity, labour, sells it (himself) to the owner of capital in order to live. Labour is the expression of the energy or power of the labourer's life. This energy or power he must sell to another person in order to live. It is his only means of existence. He works to live. But his work is not simply a part of his life. On the contrary, it is the sacrifice of it. It is a commodity which under the guise of 'free labour' he is forced by necessity to hand over to another party. The aim of the wage labourer's activity is not the product of his labour. Far from it. The silk he weaves, the palace he builds, the ores he digs from out the mine are not for him. The only thing he produces for himself is his wage, and silk, ores and palace are merely transformed for him into a certain quantity of means of existence – viz: a cotton shirt, a few pennies and the mere tenancy of a lodging house.

**The socialistic or anarchistic programme leaves the people perfectly free to unite or disunite for the purpose of production and consumption. It gives absolute freedom of contract by and between individuals or associations, and places the means of life – capital – at the disposal of the people.**

<sup>1</sup> The recommendation of Marx's analysis of capitalism is not unique to Albert Parsons. Bakunin, for example, likewise praised *Capital* in spite of opposing Marx's ideas on tactics

for the labour movement and the notion of a transitional State. (*Black Flag*)

And what of the labourer who for twelve or more hours weaves, spins, bores, turns, builds, shovels, breaks stones, carries loads, and so on? Does his twelve hours weaving, spinning, boring, turning, building, shovelling, etc., represent the active expression or energy of his life? On the contrary, life begins for him exactly where this activity, this labour of his ceases – viz: at his meals, in his tenement house, in his bed. His twelve hours work represents for him as a weaver, builder, spinner, etc., only so much earnings as will furnish him his meals, clothes and rent. Capital ever grows with what it feeds on – viz: the life, the very existence, the flesh and blood of the men, women and children of toil. The wage slaves are ‘free’ to compete with each other for the opportunity to serve capital and capitalists to compete with each other in monopolising the labourer’s products. This law of ‘free’ competition establishes the iron law of subsistence wages. Thus in every country the average wage of the working people is regulated by what it takes to maintain a bare subsistence and perpetuate their class.

The increase of capital grows with every stroke of the labourers. So does his dependence. Today there are but two classes in the world – to wit: the capitalist class and the wage class; the latter a hereditary serving class, dependent upon the former for work and bread; the former a dictating class, dominating and exploiting the latter.

The struggle of classes, the conflict between capital and labour is for possession of the labour product of the labourers. As profits rise wages fall, and as wages rise profits fall. As the share of the capitalist (his profit) increases, the share of the labourer (his wages) diminishes, and the interest of the capitalist class is in direct antagonism to the interests of the wage class. Profit and wages for every class are in inverse proportion. Wage labourers are doomed by the capitalist system to forge for themselves the golden chains which bind them more securely in industrial slavery. Thus the industrial war wages – to wit: the captains and generals of industry contest with each other as to who can

dispense with the greatest number of industrial soldiers. This brings on a rapid sub-division and simplification of the productive process, the employment of women and children, and the introduction of labour-saving machinery. Result, surplus labourers.

The United States Commissioner of Labour Statistics tells us in last year’s report that over one million able-bodied men were in compulsory idleness, and that the general average of wages for the whole wage class was estimated at fifty-five cents per day. As the struggle for existence intensifies among the labourers the struggle among capitalists for profits intensifies also. The crisis? What is it? When the dead level of cost of production is reached, which is near if not already at hand – the capitalist system – being no longer able to preserve the lives of its slaves – the wage workers – will collapse, will fall of its own weight, and fail because of its own weakness. Modern enterprise and commercialism is the old-time piracy of our fathers legalised, made respectable and safe. The homeless, the destitute, hungry and ragged, and ignorant and miserable, are the victims, the creatures, the offspring, the product of our modern system of legalised piracy. The capitalist system has its morality – a plastic, convenient morality – which it puts on or off like a coat.

The golden rule of the carpenter’s son is made subservient to the laws of trade, whose morality and religion are expounded in the churches (temples of Mammon) where the clergy propagate that good philosophy which teaches man (poor man) that he is here to suffer, denouncing as atheistic and anarchistic that other philosophy which says to man: ‘Go! the earth is the gift of God to the whole human race. Discover nature’s laws, apply them and be happy.’

To quarrel with socialism is silly and vain. To do so is to quarrel with history; to denounce the logic of events; to smother the aspirations of liberty. Mental freedom, political freedom, industrial freedom – do not these follow in the line of progress? Are they not the association of the inevitable?

**The prosecution in this case throughout has been a capitalistic prosecution, inspired by the instinct of capitalism, and I mean by that by class feelings, by a dictatorial right to rule, and a denial to common people the right to say anything or have anything to say to these men, by that class of persons who think that working people have but one right and one duty to perform, viz.: Obedience. They conducted this trial from that standpoint throughout, and, as was very truthfully stated by my comrade, Fielden, we were prosecuted ostensibly for murder, until, near the end of the trial, when all at once the jury is commanded, yea, commanded to render a verdict against us as Anarchists.**

**– Albert R. Parsons, Address to the Judge**



# A Correction

Albert R. Parsons

*The Knights of Labor*, 11 December 1886

Editor *Knights of Labor*:

Your issue of last week contains a review of Prof. Richard T. Ely's late work, entitled "The Labor Movement in America." The reviewer makes some very unfair remarks about the "International Working People's Association," as well as flagrant mis-statements of facts. Please allow me to correct the latter.

The I.W.P.A. was not founded by Bakounine. In 1883 delegates from socialistic societies in the United States, Canada and Mexico, assembled in Pittsburgh, Pa., and revived the I.W.P.A. as a part of the original International, founded by the World's Labour Congress, held in London, England, in 1864. The distinctive feature of the manifesto of the Pittsburgh Labour Congress, was opposition to centralised power, abolition of authoritative, compulsory or force government in any form. This is why we were, and are, designated anarchists.<sup>1</sup>

Your reviewer says: "There are, perhaps, 800 of the I.W.P.A. In this country, and a more windy, blatant set of men never were born." Now, as a matter of fact, there are 97 cities and industrial centres outside of Chicago, in the United States where the I.W.P.A. is organised into "groups" where membership varies from a score to hundreds. In Chicago, the I.W.P.A. had seventeen "groups" in May last, as follows: Northside Brotherhood, Karl Marx, Freedom, Northwestside, three Southwestside groups, Forward, two town of Lake groups, Southside, American, Lehr and Wehr Verein, and three Bohemian groups. These seventeen groups had in May last a member of thirteen hundred, and it must be remembered at that time there was very little agitation for membership, because the members all belong to their Trades Unions or the Knights of Labor, and they were among the most active men in the movement for the eight-hour work-day. Your reviewer says a "more windy, blatant set of men never were

born." If his opinion in their regards falls as far short of the truth as his other statements concerning the I.W.P.A., then it is beneath one's serious attention. The I.W.P.A. publishes in this city five newspapers, four weeklies and one daily; there are several papers also published by the organisations in other portions of the United States, aside from a daily at Bellville, Ill. The total membership numbers many thousands in the United States. If there are "perhaps 800 of the I.W.P.A.," they must be most extraordinary workingmen, as editors of labour papers know by experience that it usually takes the nickels of thousands of workingmen to publish even one weekly paper. One daily newspaper (*Arbeiter Zeitung*) of the I.W.P.A., published in Chicago, has a much larger circulation than either of the capitalistic German dailies.

If your reviewer was as well informed as Prof. Ely, he would know that the I.W.P.A. is *not* in opposition to Marx. So far from it that one "group" in this city as elsewhere, is called by his name. The first publication ever issued by the I.W.P.A. was written by Marx and Engels in English-German.

Your reviewer says that when "God is left out of any movement, there is very little of it left," but nevertheless, the IWPA still insists that the labour movement is in fact capitalistic as long as the supreme, absolute right of man over himself is "left out of it."

As to the I.W.A., I am not well informed, and therefore not able to give an intelligent opinion concerning it, but having been a members of the I.W.P.A. for several years and organised a number of groups myself, I know whereof I speak concerning it.

From his own statements it is a fair conclusion that your reviewer has never read the works of either Marx or Bakunin.

A.R. Parsons  
Chicago, Dec.6 1886

**Anarchy is anti-government, anti-rulers, anti-dictators, anti-bosses and drivers. Anarchy is the negation of force; the elimination of all authority in social affairs; it is the denial of the right of domination of one man over another. It is the diffusion of rights, of power, of duties, equally and freely among all the people.**

– Albert R. Parsons, Address to the Judge

<sup>1</sup> Parsons was correcting someone who, in a book review in the previous issue of *The Knights of Labor*, (4 December 1886), claimed that the IWPA was founded by Bakunin in 1872, took issue with the book's claim that the "IWA differs only in a few particulars from the IWPA" as Bakunin and stated that "Marx differed in more than a few particulars" to Bakunin (hence his expulsion), and had dismissed the IWPA as "so small and of so little importance" that "it should hardly

have been given a chapter" in the book. The Federalist International, like the 1881 London Congress, viewed itself as the genuine continuation of the organisation founded in London in 1864 and kept its initial commitment to diversity of tactics which Marx had ended. This meant that Marx could have been a member of both it and the IWPA, although whether he would have joined the latter is unlikely given its politics. (*Black Flag*)

# August Spies

## An Anarchist and the Ministers of the Congregational Church

August Spies

*The Alarm*, 9 January 1886

### A Few Explanations

(Taken from the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*)<sup>1</sup>

Rev. Dr. Cragin had delivered a lecture on "Socialism," a few weeks ago, before an assemblage of ministers of the Congregational church. In order to ascertain whether Dr. Cragin's interpretation was correct, the gentlemen invited Comrade A. Spies to make a reply at a similar conference, held on December 28, at the Grand Pacific. There were about sixty ministers present. Comrade Holmes was also there.

The president introduced me to his colleagues, and from this moment until I bade them goodbye, the reverend gentlemen did not turn their eyes from me. I never spoke to an audience more attentive than this. Was it actual interest or mere curiosity, I shall not tell. I said, in a concise extract, nearly this:

GENTLEMEN: The paper read by Dr. Cragin at your last meeting did not touch the fundamental idea nor the principal features of modern Socialism. That kind of Socialism to which the paper referred, belongs to the domain of purely idealistic perceptions, poetry and dreams, and the lecturer was not so wrong, indeed, when he signified the aims of Socialism described by him as utopian. This particular Socialism is rather a "philosopheme" resulting from the Christian mode of intuition, while modern Socialism is based upon facts and experience. This, perhaps, is the reason why the representatives of the church know nothing about the latter kind of Socialism, and why they do not understand or do not want to understand it. This Socialism is nothing else than the *resume* of the phenomena of the social life of the past and present examined as to their causes, and brought into casual connection. It based upon the established fact that the economic conditions and institutions of nations form the



**August Spies (1855-1887)**

substructure of all their social institutions and relations, of our philosophy and views, nay, even of religion; and furthermore, that all the changes of economic conditions, and the progress of mankind resulted from the struggles that took place between the dominating and oppressed classes in the different ages.

You, gentlemen, cannot embrace this standpoint of empirical science. You are bound by your profession to do homage to another mode of "reasoning," which knows absolutely nothing of what actually exist, and knows all about things entirely incomprehensible to common

mortals. That's why you cannot become Socialists. [exclamations "Oh!"].

It may be known to you that an infinite number of inventions and discoveries were made during this century which have caused great and amazing revolutions in the manufacture of the necessities of life and comfort. In the place of workmen are put machines, and manual labour was made superfluous. The machines have caused the concentration of labour, displaced the mechanic, caused the minute division of labour among the hands, and the advantages of these changes were such as animate an incessant growth of this new system of production. The result of this process of concentration of the means of labour, which is spreading, while the old system of distribution was retained, is that anomaly under which society is suffering. The means of production fell into the hands of a number of men which is ever diminishing, while human labour, made superfluous, displaced and disorganised by machines, was doomed to pauperism,

<sup>1</sup> This article was quoted, in part, by Spies in his final speech during his trial, albeit it a slightly different version: *The*

*famous speeches of the eight Chicago anarchists in court* (Chicago: Lucy E. Parsons, 1910), 19-21. (*Black Flag*)

vagabondage, so-called, crimes and prostitution; evils which you, gentlemen, intend to abolish by your prayer book. To socialists, therefore, you seem more of a curiosity, and they view you more of a curiosity, and they view you with pitiable smiles. [commotion]. Or tell me, what have your prayers, what have your teaching of morals accomplished in order to mitigate the lot of those who are condemned to vice by poverty and want? [Many of the minister rise: "We have done much in single cases"]. Maybe in individual cases you have given alms. But does this influence the social conditions, or had it an effect as to their mitigation? None, absolutely none! You must confess it, gentlemen, because you cannot quote a single example to the contrary! Now, then, the proletarians who are doomed to misery and starvation by our centralised and labour-saving industrial arrangements and whose number points in this country, to a million and a half, is it improbable that they, as well as the thousands of men who join their ranks every day, and the millions who work for a miserable pittance, will receive their slow extermination from the hand of the thievish, murderous, but at the same time good Christian masters with resignation and christian submission! They will resist it, will come to a fight. The necessity of the socialisation of the means and instruments of production becomes a reality, and the era of Socialism, of common co-operative labour begins.

The expropriation of the possessing classes, the socialisation of what they possess, and common co-operative labour – not for speculative purposes, but in order to satisfy the demands we make on life; in short, common labour for the purpose of preservation and enjoyment of life! That is in large outlines what we call Socialism.

This is not, as you may presume, a nicely invented plan, the realisation of which one might acquire if it were possible. Nay, the socialisation of the means and instruments of production, the means of communication, the soil, and so on, is not only something desirable; it is an imperative necessity! And we find in history everywhere, that whenever something once became a necessity, the next step was the removal of this necessity by the introduction of what was logically irremissible.

Our great factories, mines, railways, ships, etc., have turned too extensive to be exploited and controlled by one man. On the other hand we observe everywhere the abnormality and the disadvantages of the unregulated private production and enterprise. We see one man or a number of men expropriating not only all inventions of technics, but all realisable natural resources; water, steam, electricity, etc. as well; every new invention, every new discovery belongs to them. The world exists exclusively for them. That they destroy their fellow-men, they seem not even to perceive, that they manufacture gold from bodies of little children by their

machines, this they claim to be charity and christian kindness. They murder, as I have said, little children and women by hard labour, and force on the other hand strong men go hungry from want of toil. These facts and hundreds of others are striking indeed.

Inquire how such things are possible, and you must find the answer that private enterprise, private ownership of the means of production and consumption are responsible. The idea of a social, co-operative, rational, and well regulated system of production impresses itself upon your mind. The advantages of it are so apparent, so evident and so convincing – and there no other way out in fact.

According to physical laws a body moves, consciously or unconsciously, in that direction where it meets the least resistance. The same it is with society as a whole. The road to co-operative labour and distribution is levelled by the concentration of the means of labour under our present private-capitalistic system. We are already marching upon this road. We cannot go back, even if we wanted to. The power of circumstances is driving us on to Socialism.

That I tell the truth, you yourself demonstrate it. As a matter of fact, the theologians are conservative and reactionary, but even they are unable to escape from the influence of Socialism. They attempt to connect the Christian church with Socialism. I tell you it is a useless endeavour! The one has absolutely nothing in common with the other, no more than the Christian Bible has in common with mathematics.

At this point questions of all sorts poured down upon me.

A very reverend looking gentleman wanted to know who would be made treasurer in the new society; another was curious to know what would be its institutions. Prof. Wiley inquired for the future of the family. My answer horrified them. I said the marriages of today were an institution of property, and but a specific form of prostitution.

"Please explain that," they shouted.

"Very well," I went on. "Your churches, for instance, are auction shops, a market on which the marriageable daughters are brought by their mothers. Not the man, he is a matter of secondary consideration, his money bag decides. Can you deny this?"

"Yes; we deny it most emphatically!" they cried.

"Gentlemen, then I feel sorry for you. I would recommend to you to pay a little more attention to the realities of life, and a little less worthless doctrines; How is it that a rich girl so seldom is married to a poor man, and *vice versa*? If there once happens such a case, the fact is deemed of importance enough to be telegraphed all over the country as a sensation. I now

ask you whether those sales are anything else than prostitution?"

"As far as Christians are concerned I must protest against this definition. Among Christians sensitiveness is so highly developed, their feelings are so cultivated, that they never would sell themselves in such a manner."

I couldn't help to smile at this assurance, and said that my experience had taught me differently.

"Then I suppose you are going to substitute 'free love' for the marriages of today?" one of the divines asked.

"Yes, if you mean 'free love' in contradiction to 'bought love.' However, this is self-evident. On the field of economical equality the trade in human flesh, whether in this or in any other form, must stop, as a matter of course."

The "free love" had brought to their feet nearly all of them, and a deluge of questions poured down on me, which gave me the proof that the theme was one of special interest to the pious gentlemen. As they were asking and speaking all at the same time, the chairman called his impetuous brethren to order.

"It seems you entirely throw aside the christian morality; I shall tackle you on this very point," declared one of them, whose appearance was a most rustic one. His colleagues seemed to fear that he was going to say something silly, and they tried to stop him; but he was not going to be bridled. "Please, let the gentleman go ahead," I put in; then I continued "Christian morality? That depends upon what you mean by this special morality: Do you mean the few sentences showing noble-mindedness and humanity, which strangely have strayed into the bible? If such be the case, I must say, that these teachings are by no means of christian origin. We find them in the philosophical traditions of the ancient Hindoos already. But if you mean what is called 'christian morality' in the every-day-life, you have judged me correctly. I throw it aside – more, I despise it! It is the palm-leaf which serves as the cover for the baseness and viciousness of its adherents."

"Then you neither believe in right nor wrong?" hastily asked the same gentleman.

"Hardly in the sense, you ask. You most probably believe that right and wrong are perpetual and unchangeable. Your intervate dogmas form the base of this discernment of the ideas. Men of my calibre at the other end, who measure things with a newer rule, admit that we might easily deceive ourselves in consequence of our imperfect knowledge, and that what yesterday appeared to us as right, tomorrow might look different; but then, this question doesn't seem to have any pertinence. \* \* \* \*"

"Can you tell me what a lie is?" It came from the lips of the "smarty" in a half waggish, half jocose manner.

"Why not? But not before you have told me what *truth* is!"

He did not seem to be disinclined to answer; but his colleagues would not let him; he had to keep silent.

"And now, Mr. S., won't you tell us how you are going to carry out the expropriation of the possessing classes?" asked Rev. Dr. Scudder, who, by the way, is a mighty luminary before the Lord.

"The answer is the thing itself. The key is furnished by the storms raging through the industrial life of the present. You see how penurious the owners of the factories, of the mines, cling to their privileges, and will not yield the breadth of an inch. On the other hand, you see the half-starved proletarians driven to the verge of violence."

"So your remedy would be violence?"

"Remedy? Well, I should like it better if it could be done without violence, but you, gentlemen, and the class you represent, take care that it can not be accomplished otherwise. Let us suppose that the workingmen of today go to their employers, and say to them: 'Listen! Your administration of affairs doesn't suit us any more; it leads to disastrous consequences. While one part of us are worked to death, the others, out of employment, are starved to death; little children are ground to death in the factories, while strong, vigorous men remain idle; the masses live in misery while a small class of thieves enjoy luxury and wealth; all this is the result of your maladministration, which will bring misfortune even to yourselves; step down and out now: let us have your property, which you have stolen anyway – we shall take this thing in our own hands now, we shall administrate matters satisfactorily, and regulate the institutions of society; voluntarily we shall pay you a life-long pension.' Now, do you think the 'bosses' would accept this proposition? You certainly don't believe it. Therefore force will have to decide, or do you know of any other way?"

"That will cost torrents of blood! Don't you shudder at this? And then where do you get armies to do it?"

"Our armies? Did you ever read about the eruption of a volcano? Do you ask the cyclones what they derive their power from? Whether I don't shudder at the 'torrents of blood'? Why, let those shudder who bring about the bloodshed. You, gentlemen, belong to the first rank of them. Besides, what does it matter if some thousands, or even tens of thousands, of drones are removed during the coming struggle? These are the very ones, who yearly destroy hundreds of thousands of proletarians – a fact which *you* don't seem to know."

"So you are organising a revolution?"

"To organise such a thing is a difficult task. A revolution is a sudden upswelling, is a convulsion of the fevered masses of society. We only prepare society for

it and insist that the labourers should arm themselves and keep themselves ready for the action. The better the latter are armed, the easier the struggle will be ended, the less there will be of bloodshed.”

“How large do you think is the number of men in the United States thinking similar as you?”

“That can’t be stated. Half a million would hardly be estimated too high. Besides, you will have seen that especially those who are continually denouncing the Anarchists as the ‘ignorant foreigners’ (here some of them smiled) are the very ones who will use violent measures. Sorrowfully, they commence at the wrong end; instead of shooting and clubbing down the poor, starved ‘scabs,’ they would, as sensible man, without much ado cut the jugular vein of their extortioners. This, at least, would be reasonable.”

“What would be the order of things in the new society?”

“I must decline to answer this question, as it is, till now, a mere matter of speculation. The organisation of labour on a co-operative basis offers no difficulties.

The large establishments of today might be used as patterns. Those who will have to solve these questions will expediently do it, instead of working according to our prescriptions (if we should make anything of the kind); they will be directed by the circumstances and relations of their time, and these are beyond our horizon. About this you needn’t trouble yourselves.”

“But, friend, don’t you think that about a week after the division, the provident will have all, while the spendthrift will have nothing?”

Under this thought a well-fed little man, with a belly of comfortable roundness, greatly seemed to worry.

“This, then, is the result of my endeavour!” I thought to myself, and agitated to some extent, I responded:

**How can anything be destroyed which does not exist? In our times there is no individuality; that only can be developed under Socialism, when mankind will be independent economically.**

“If I should go out on the street and explain the Pythagorean or any other mathematical formula to a host of little boot-blacks, these would doubtless think me a fool. You—”

“The question is out of order,” interfered the chairman; “there was not said about division.”

Professor Wilcox: “Don’t you think the introduction of Socialism would destroy all individuality?”

“How can anything be destroyed which does not exist? In our times there is no individuality; that only can be developed under Socialism, when mankind will be independent economically. Where do you meet today with real individuality? Look at yourselves, gentlemen! You don’t dare to give utterance to any subjective opinion which might not suit the feelings of your bread-givers and customers. You are hypocrites (murmurs of indignation); every businessman is a hypocrite. Everywhere is

mockery, servility, lies and fraud – and the labourers! You feign anxiety about their individuality, about the individuality of a class that has been degraded to machines – used each day for ten or twelve hours as appendages of the lifeless machines! About their individuality you are anxious!”

The fixed time had already been five times extended, and now adjournment became necessary. But before the motion to adjourn, it was moved that a vote of thanks should be rendered me. I protested. I hadn’t come here for their sake, and therefore they had no occasion to be thankful. Notwithstanding the protest the motion was adopted.

A number of pious gentlemen asked me for the titles of books which might give them further information.

## Anarchism

(From a lecture by A. Spies)  
*The Alarm*, 6 and 20 February 1886

[I]

To most of our American friends the word Anarchy is an evil sounding word, but another name for wickedness and chaos. Anarchy comes from the Greek and, translated into English, means *without authority*, dominion, reign or rule – that is *self-government*. Anarchism means self-government. Without self-government there can in reality be no liberty. Why then get frightened at a word that expresses the highest

thought of liberty? If the word Anarchy has heretofore been applied to express a state of confusion or chaos, this may be attributed to the fact that man has been taught in former times that his affairs were regulated, that he was ruled by a supernatural being; that without authority and governments by God and his servants, *order* was an impossibility. To have said two hundred years ago that mankind could get along without the authority and so-called regulations of the church would

have sufficed to consider one a madman, to put him in a lunatic asylum, or burn him on the stake as a heretic.

Even at this very day you hear people say, “society cannot exist without religion; people would kill and rob each other, if they did not fear eternal punishment.” We laugh at this absurdity and point to the fact that among us heathens, crimes against the lives of our fellowmen are very unusual, very rare, while among the religious, church-going, God-fearing people they are very common, and actually seem to form a part of their religious rituals.

Thus we see that the materialists have rid themselves of the authority of God and church. But while they did this, they fell into another error no less grievous than that from which they had just emerged. They were still the slaves of old prejudices. They could not, it seems, “jump out of their own boots;” the deep-rooted and carefully fostered superstitions of countless generations were yet too strong within them; they made out the greater part of their life, their philosophy; they lacked the moral courage, the conviction, the unbiased and clear reasoning faculties to become actual freemen. In short, while they thought they had ascended the zenith of intellectual development, the eggshells from which they had sprung, the accumulated nonsense of centuries, kept them still encumbered with such tenacity that their moveability, their growth, was greatly impeded and they were unable to rise far above the follies of their age.

The imperfections of man felt – but not understood – makes him a child; makes him seek a mysterious master.

This want of self-reliance, a characteristic feature of ignorance, makes him the unconditional slave of some idealistic notion of perfection, whether God, king, priest, state, or any other authority. Our materialists of today, for instance, or rather the majority of them, still believe in the necessity of a state, a certain political organisation intended, so we are told, for the protection of society. We know, or better, ought to know, something about the history of this ancient barbarian institution. Its leaves are stained with the blood of the innocent and poor. It is a long, long record of dark deeds, foul plots, heinous and horrifying crimes against society. Its tradition is the gorgonic picture of a monstrous robber and cut-throat. It owes its very birth to the ravenous desires of its generators and never since

its existence had it been false to the principle of its creation. It has changed, it is true, quite often, but only in form, as a professional robber changes his garb to deceive his unsuspecting victim; like the panther, whose colours have such a perplexing uniformity with the surrounding flora of African woods that the victim cannot detect it. The state is a perfect chameleon. “First it was despotism, then monarchy, then aristocracy, to-day democracy, but always tyranny;” its outspoken object: organised robbery; murder and plunder; its character has never changed. There are, I say, many good men, many wise and well-meaning men to-day who have not sufficiently emancipated themselves from

the superstitions and follies of the dark past to see and understand the true inwardness of this barbarian institution, called state.

The *utopians* of the Old Socialistic school viewed in this very institution the saviour of mankind. And even this very day it is necessary to argue against the absurdity of such a theory. It is sad. The state at its best is a political institution with the avowed purpose of the government of one class over another or all others. Proudhon calls it quite correctly “a conspiracy of the possessing class against the non-possessing class.” When you abolish the economic basis of classes, you abolish the state, when you re-establish a state – the form makes

no difference – you re-establish classes and class rule.

“But men must be governed!” you say, “they must be guided by law!”

Well, if man is such an incurable fool, a child that must be guided and governed; if he is immature, who, then, is to determine, what man or men have reached the stage of maturity to be fit to govern the others? The helpless immature?

I claim that man can govern himself. And if he cannot, it would be better that a race of imbeciles, which we would be in that case, perish, than forever to be slaves of designing knaves.

If man be yet immature then our governors are the same. Should one or a small number of men leads all the other blind millions who compose the nation? Never yet have we found the wise men of the nation its political rulers! “You believe not,” said the great Norwegian philosopher to his boy, “with what little sense this world is ruled.” Fortunately the inexorable laws of nature don’t mind the quackeries of our legislators: If it did, there would be nothing left of our

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planet any more. Our political quacks would long ago have rendered it uninhabitable.

You will say, “Well, but we must have some kind of authority.”

Says Bakunin: “What is this authority? Is-it the inevitable power of the natural laws which manifest themselves in the necessary concatenation and succession of phenomena in the physical and social worlds? Indeed, against these laws revolt is not only forbidden -- it is impossible.”

“We may [mis]understand them or not know them at all, but we cannot disobey them; because they constitute the fundamental conditions of our existence; they envelop us, penetrate us, regulate all our movements, thoughts and acts – even when we try to disobey them, we only show their omnipotence.

“Of these laws we are the absolute slaves. But in such slavery there is no humiliation. For slavery supposes an *external* master, a lawmaker outside of him whom he commands; while the natural laws are not outside of us, they are inherent in us; they constitute our being physically, intellectually and morally. We live, we breathe, we act, we think, we wish *only* through these laws. How in the world could we revolt against *them*?”<sup>1</sup>

And the laws under which we live, the laws made by man, the laws upon our statute books – are they in conformity with the laws laid down by nature? Au contraire, they are not. Are they an expression of psychological facts, the development of a natural law? Nay! They have realised an abstraction, a metaphor, a fiction; and that without deigning to look at the consequences. They endorse monstrous pretensions. Blind, brutal laws! The voice of discord, deceit and blood!

“O,” say the state idealists, “that is true; when you speak of the laws of present society; but we will establish true democracy; the people will then make their own laws – good laws, of course!”

Well, I don't doubt that they are sincere, and mean well enough. But I have nothing in store for their ideal; can't endure it. In fact, I abhor it. In the United States we have a representative government. Here the people, it is claimed, make their own laws, which, however, I admit is false. The people have in fact nothing to do with the

making of laws – no more than in Russia or Germany. But supposing they made their own laws upon the majority principle, supposing they did have, as they do in Switzerland, the *referendum* – do you for one minute believe that our laws would then be more just, more in conformity with common sense and reason, be a declaration of scientific facts? I don't. I don't believe in the wisdom of majorities. Majorities have never yet in history proved a success. You know that!

“This will be quite different when the economic conditions have entered into a new phase, when the brutal struggle of existence, as now known, has made room for co-operative production and distribution,” say our state idealists.

I admit that. This fact cannot be disputed. The economic conditions form the basis of organised society, of all

social conditions and relations. Yet it is an equally indisputable fact that the best institutions, when misguided, will lose their beneficial character and becomes a plague, a burden, a curse! it is our duty to prevent this. We must take history as our instructor. And this instructor declares very strongly against *authority*.

If you have a government, no matter how organised or constituted, you cannot prevent the formation in a few years' time of a body of politicians, privileged in fact, though not in law, who devote themselves exclusively to the direction of public affairs and finally form a sort of political aristocracy, hierarchy, or whatever you may call it. Witness, the United States and Switzerland!

Therefore no external legislation and no authority – one, for that matter, being inseparable from the other, and

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<sup>1</sup> A slight paraphrase of Bakunin's argument in *God and the State*, published posthumously in 1882 before being

translated by Benjamin R. Tucker into English in 1883. (*Black Flag*)

both tending to the servitude of society and the degradation of legislators themselves.<sup>1</sup>

### [II]

Now, ladies and gentlemen, *archie*, that is authority, law, government, etc., or *anarchie*, which is the reverse, after all, like religion, plays only a secondary part in contemporary society. The relations between man and man are not the result of our government or misgovernment, as most people, and even many of our friends, believe; these relations are the outcome of our economic flaws and the evolution of a social system based on inequality of conditions.

The best farmer cannot, with all his skill and knowledge, succeed in raising a good crop on barren ground; fertile soil is the pre-condition for a good crop; he can, through his skill, knowledge and labour, materially aid the growth of it; but all these accomplishments will avail him nothing if he has not a good soil.

Thus it is with society. All ethics and philosophical theories for the elevation of society, all attempts to reform mankind may come from unquestionable motives; they may be very nice and fine things, but they are of no use to us as long as the soil on which society is supposed to grow, as long as the economic conditions remain unchanged. All Anarchists, Communists and a good many slow-going Socialists agree upon this.

It is to be regretted and yet natural that they do not combine their strength and efforts on this pre-eminent question.

When you ask me what are the aims of the Anarchists economically, I can answer briefly: They are the same as those of modern communism, founded by Carl Marx and further developed by other great thinkers. It would occupy more than one evening to go over the whole ground of this science, therefore you will pardon me when I confine myself to a short review and sketch of it.

Modern communism is in substance the result of observation – on one hand of the existing class contrast between the possessing and non-possessing classes, between the capitalist and wage-worker, and on the other hand of the disorder of production and consumption. But in its theoretical form communism appears as a more consistent continuation and development of the principles of the great French philosophers of the eighteenth century. Like all new theories it had to deal with and proceed from already existing *philosophical* material, however deep its roots lay in the materialistic economic facts.

The great men of France who prepared their countrymen for the great revolution were radically revolutionary. They negated all external authority and

cleared away the old rubbish of superstitious belief – religion, perception of nature, of society, and of [the] state among the people. All existing things were subjected to their scrupulous critique. Everything was called upon to justify its existence before the tribunal of *reason*, or cease to exist.

The reflecting intellect was the only recognised measuring scale for all things. It was the dawn of day, the age of reason. Superstition, iniquity, privileges and oppression were condemned to make room for what they considered eternal truth, eternal justice, equality, and the inalienable rights of man.

We know now that *this* reign of reason was nothing more than the ideal land of the *bourgeoisie*; that the eternal justice was realised in the *bourgeoisie justice*; that the proclaimed equality was the civil equality before the law; that by the inalienable rights of man was meant the right of private property.

The thinkers of the last century could not see beyond the *periphery* of their own epoch. They were idealists. The adherents of Rousseau, of whose philosophy Robespierre, the prophet of a *doctrinaire* state, was the truest apostle. It was he who in the name of an assumed virtue guillotined first the Hebertists (Anarchists, and the only men who conceived the mission of the great revolution), and then Danton, in whose person he assassinated the republic. He thus prepared the way for Napoleon's triumph and dictatorship.

Then followed the *regime* of the bourgeoisie with all its evils. The utopist Socialists, St. Simon, Fourier, Owen and many others appear upon the stage. Though they see the fallacious reign of the bourgeoisie, the cultivation of hypocrisy; the enslavement of the masses and their misery under the typical system of private property and the latter's agency – the civil government – they are idealists; they follow the path of their predecessors; they only partly recognise the class contrast, and seek to harmonise the contending forces again on the principle of reason, "eternal justice" and "equality." Though they go a good way farther, especially Fourier, than those who had preceded them, their theories are utopistic – they were dreamers.

Then came Carl Marx. The bourgeoisie had proven a total failure. The chasm between rich and poor was widening day by day; the condition of the wage-worker, instead of improving, had grown worse than it had been under the feudal system. The bourgeoisie, once in power, gave no redress to the proletariat. The former privileges of the latter had been swept away, so that their condition was more lamentable than ever before.

The progress and thrift of industry upon the capitalistic basis made poverty and misery of the labouring classes a necessary condition of that society. The number of

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that this and the previous paragraph are paraphrasing Bakunin's *God and the State*. (*Black Flag*)



crimes multiplied from year to year, corruption. took the place of forcible subjection, the almighty dollar took the place of the sword, prostitution spread as never before, matrimony remained in its lawful recognised form – the official cover of prostitution; in short things had become worse. These facts forced upon the thinkers a closer observation of the social phenomenal and an analysis of the historical development of our race. The result was the discovery and establishment of the fact that all historical changes had been the result of class struggles, and that these struggles had invariably been caused by the systems of production and communication – in short, by the economic structure of the respective epoch; that the economical structure of society forms the basis of all political, ethical and philosophical conceptions and institutions. This discovery was the end of ideal Socialism and materialistic period with Socialism as an empiric science begins.

The next step was the analysis of our present capitalistic system of production. It was imperative that we should understand its true nature and thereby explain the phenomena. It was traced to the law of surplus value.

The two great discoveries form the basis of Communism and Anarchism. We know that social changes do not result from *philosophy*, but from *economy*, and that philosophy is only the reflex of the processes that take place within the economic body. That Communism seeks, to abolish the system of individual arbitrary production I presume you all know. This most vital function, the basis of all other social organisations, society must resume at all hazards. To permit it to the arbitrary will and caprice of one or many number of individuals would be social suicide. Under the present management, society is doing some very suicidal work. The victims that fall daily to this negligence of society are numberless. Society most awake to its duty. We “Anarchists” are doing our best to stir up, wake up that slumbering giant.

If our science, which I have briefly outlined, is correct, then I am and so are all Anarchists justified in the conclusion that the economic change which we so ardently seek to bring about can only be the result of a class struggle, of a *revolution* of the proletariat against the capitalistic class.

If our science is correct then the Anarchists are justified in their conclusion that an economic change cannot be brought about by legislative enactments – if such was at all possible – because the economic structure is the *basis* – political and all other institutions are mere

agencies of the same – and not *vice versa*, as believed by many. Hence, their abstention from politics is justified.

Then they are furthermore justified in ridiculing the absurdity of political action by Socialists, because the cornerstone and mainstay of the *bourgeoisie* state is private property. Private property is the only principle that makes its existence possible Those who expect reform from this source are anything but modest. They expect that this organisation – state – at their request will turn itself out of its own province by abandoning the only principle and foundation it has, and commit suicide.

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No “state” has ever shown the slightest inclination to do such a thing. Our political revolutionists must hence be considered optimists and idealists. Their argument that political action is a good means of propaganda seems to me equally optimistic and sanguine. The *Chicago Times* publishes in an editorial of yesterday’s issue the following paragraph, that I will read to you in this connection:

“The charming conservators of public virtue have often sagely announced that the effective way to rid the mechanism of corrupt politics, and free it from the

manipulation of unworthy characters, is for the ‘good men’ – men who have not wholly expatriated the moral sense – to attend the party caucuses and participate in the nominating assemblies. Every virtuous man that ever has acted upon that sage counsel knows its foolishness – knows that a person unskilled in the arts of gambling might as well enter the gambling house expecting to beat the professional blackleg at his own game, as to enter the party caucus expecting to beat the professional politician at his own game.”

The *Times* ought to know a little something about politics!

The propaganda of the *Anarchists* is not only justifiable, but would suggest itself very forcibly for general adoption, if it were one of *choice*, and not as it is, of necessity. Nobody will dispute the fact that within our economic body a great tremendous revolution is in progress. The starving millions are the dying soldiers on the economic battlefield. The life of the *proletair* is but a slow, lingering death! Hear we what the great savant

[Elisée] Reclus, in his own powerful language, has to say on this:

“The entire populations, placed between the alternatives of death by starvation and toils which they detest, are constrained to choose the latter. And if we would deal frankly with the barbarous society to which we belong, we must acknowledge that murder, disguised under a thousand insidious and scientific forms, still, as in the times of primitive savagery, terminates the majority of lives. The economist sees around him but one vast field of carnage, and with the coldness of a statistician he counts the slain as on the evening after a great battle. Judge by these figures. The mean mortality among the well-to-do is, at the utmost, one in sixty. Now the population of Europe being a third of a thousand millions, the average deaths, according to the rate of mortality among the fortunate, should not exceed five millions. They are three times five millions! What have we done with these ten million human beings killed before their time? If it be true that we have duties, one towards the other, are we not responsible for the servitude, the cold, the hunger, the miseries of every sort, which doom the unfortunate to untimely deaths? Race of Cains, what have we done with our brothers?”<sup>1</sup>

Aye, and those against whom the sword is drawn, should they not resent?

Aside from this I am of the same opinion as the Irish patriot, P. J. Sheridan, that the execution of Cavendish and Burke had called the attention of all the civilised world to the Irish question, which had until then been an obscure question to the outer world. I am of the opinion that a dynamite bomb, thrown at the right moment and right place, is a better agitator than years and years of active politics.

The position the Anarchists occupy at present is unquestionably a good one, a justifiable one, and the only consistent and correct one from the standpoint of modern Communism.

And now about the future organisation. Only an utopist would attempt to lay out a perfect system of society – man is imperfect, man constituting society, the latter must likewise be imperfect.

Economically we want productive organisations – locally, if possible, otherwise if necessary; organisations

based upon the principles of equality. The necessity of organisation and association is a natural law.

Organisations, when governed and run against these laws cease to be beneficent. The development of these organisations must therefore be spontaneous, must be left to grow up under the law of the eternal fitness of things. These organisations will have their regulations, it is true, but they will not be binding; they may be changed as often as the members deem it necessary. You will probably say: “Well, that is law and authority.”

That is not so. Here the shoemakers, cabinetmakers, tailors, etc., each for themselves regulate their business affairs, *nothing more!* Here the tailor doesn’t make laws for the painter and the painter for the shoemaker!

The *Anarchists* do not reject all authority. Far from that. In matter of boots they refer to the boot-maker; concerning houses, canals, or railroads, they consult the architect or engineer, etc. But they will not suffer such authority to be imposed upon them. They accept them freely and with all the respect merited by their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving, however, their incontestable right of criticism and censure.<sup>2</sup>

It will be necessary that each of these industrial associations have some kind of an administration. Choosing the same themselves, it would be unreasonable to suppose that they will choose one not possessed of the required ability. One shoemaker can tell that his colleague understands his business, while his opinion regarding the efficiency of an architect wouldn’t amount to anything. There will be national and international associations. But we need no government to run them. Our mail service is international. Nobody governs it. Each nation finds it a great advantage to belong to it.

Man is not a fool, and will much less than now be such in [the] future, when all conditions for intellectual development are given; when higher and nobler aspirations will take the place of greed. Hence we may safely leave the future to him. It would be an assumption on our part to establish a dogma as to the organisation of the future society.

The story is told of a citizen of Paris in the 17<sup>th</sup> century having heard it said that in Venice there was no king, the good man could not recover from his astonishment, and nearly died from laughter at so ridiculous a thing. So strong is our prejudice.

## **Economically we want productive organisations... based upon the principles of equality**

<sup>1</sup> Elisée Reclus, *An Anarchist on Anarchy*, originally published in the *Contemporary Review* (January/June 1884) before being reprinted as a pamphlet by Benjamin R. Tucker. Albert Parsons later included it in his book *Anarchism: Its*

*Philosophy and Scientific Basis as Defined by Some of Its Apostles* (Chicago: Lucy E. Parsons, 1887). (*Black Flag*)  
<sup>2</sup> This repeats, almost word for word, Bakunin’s arguments from *God on the State* on this subject. (*Black Flag*)

# Address to the Court (extracts)

## August Spies

7 October 1886

YOUR HONOUR: In addressing this court I speak as the representative of one class to the representative of another. I will begin with the words uttered five hundred years ago on a similar occasion, by the Venetian Doge Faheri, who, addressing the court, said: *“My defence is your accusation; the causes of my alleged crime your history!”* I have been indicted on a charge of murder, as an accomplice or accessory. Upon this indictment I have been convicted. There was no evidence produced by the State to show or even indicate

that I had any knowledge of the man who threw the bomb, or that I myself had anything to do with the throwing of the missile, unless, of course, you weigh the testimony of the accomplices of the State’s attorney and Bonfield, the testimony of Thompson and Gilmer, by the price they were paid for it. If there was no evidence to show that I was legally responsible for the deed, then my conviction and the execution of the sentence is nothing

less than wilful, malicious, and deliberate murder, as foul a murder as may be found in the annals of religious, political, or any other sort of persecution. There have been many judicial murders committed where the representatives of the State were acting in good faith, believing their victims to be guilty of the charge accused of. In this case the representatives of the State cannot shield themselves with a similar excuse. For they themselves have fabricated most of the testimony which was used as a pretence to convict us; to convict us by a jury picked out to convict! Before this court, and before the public, which is supposed to be the State, I charge the State’s attorney and Bonfield with the heinous conspiracy to commit murder.

[...]

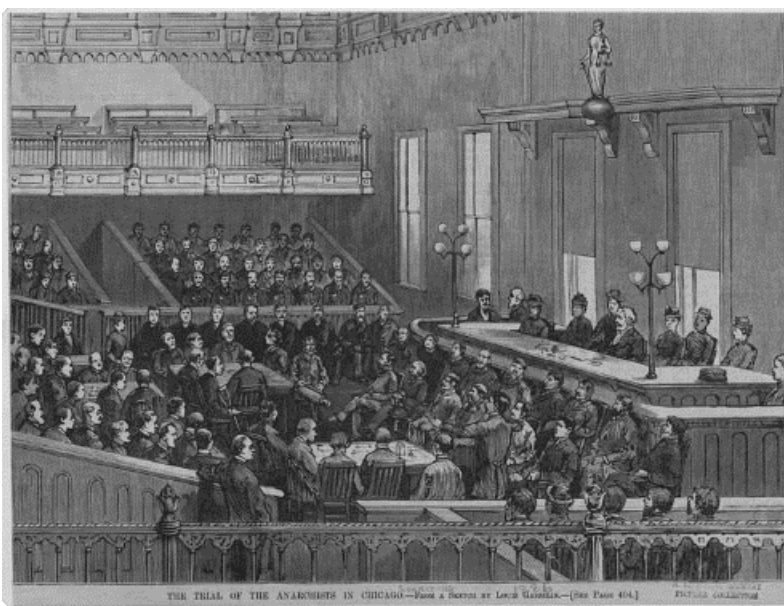
No, I repeat, the prosecution has not established our legal guilt, notwithstanding the purchased and perjured testimony of some, and notwithstanding the originality of the proceedings of this trial. And as long as this has not been done, and you pronounce upon us the sentence of an appointed vigilance committee, acting as a jury, I say, you, the alleged representatives and high priests of

“law and order,” are the real and only law breakers, and in this case to the extent of murder. It is well that the people know this. And when I speak of the people I don’t mean the few co-conspirators of Grinnell, the noble politicians who thrive upon the misery of the multitudes. These drones may constitute the State, they may control the State, they may have their Grinnells, their Bonfields and other hirelings! No, when I speak of the people I speak of the great mass of human bees, the working people, who unfortunately are not yet

conscious of the rascalities that are perpetrated in the “name of the people,” – in their name.

The contemplated murder of eight men, whose only crime is that they have dared to speak the truth, may open the eyes of these suffering millions; may wake them up. Indeed, I have noticed that our conviction has worked miracles in this direction already. The class that clamours for

our lives, the good, devout Christians, have attempted in every way, through their newspapers and otherwise, to conceal the true and only issue in this case. By simply designating the defendants as Anarchists, and picturing them as a newly discovered tribe or species of cannibals, and by inventing shocking and horrifying stories of dark conspiracies said to be planned by them – these good Christians zealously sought to keep the naked fact from the working people and other righteous parties, namely: That on the evening of May 4, two hundred armed men, under the command of a notorious ruffian, attacked a meeting of peaceable citizens! With what intention? With the intention of murdering them, or as many of them as they could. I refer to the testimony given by two of our witnesses. The wage workers of this city began to object to being fleeced too much – they began to say some very true things, but they were highly disagreeable to our Patrician class; they put forth – well, some very modest demands. They thought eight hours hard toil a day for scarcely two hours’ pay was enough. This “lawless rabble” had to be silenced! The only way to silence them was to frighten them, and murder those whom they looked up to as their leaders. Yes, these “foreign dogs” had to be taught a lesson, so that they might never again interfere with the



THE TRIAL OF THE ANARCHISTS IN CHICAGO—FROM A SKETCH BY LOUIS MASSIE—(SEE PAGE 414.) HISTORICAL COLLECTION

high-handed exploitation of their benevolent and Christian masters. Bonfield, the man who would bring a blush of shame to the managers of the St. Bartholomew night – Bonfield, the illustrious gentleman with a visage that would have done excellent service to Dore in portraying Dante’s fiends of hell – Bonfield was the man best fitted to consummate the conspiracy of the Citizens’ Association, of our Patricians. If I had thrown that bomb, or had caused it to be thrown, or had known of it, I would not hesitate a moment to say so. It is true that a number of lives were lost – many were wounded. But hundreds of lives were thereby saved! But for that bomb, there would have been a hundred widows and hundreds of orphans where now there are a few. These facts have been carefully suppressed, and we were accused and convicted of conspiracy by the real conspirators and their agents. This, your honour, is one reason why sentence should not be passed by a court of justice – if that name has any significance at all.

[...]

Grinnell’s main argument against the defendants was – “They were foreigners; they were not citizens.” I cannot speak for the others. I will only speak for myself. I have been a resident of this State fully as long as Grinnell, and probably have been as good a citizen – at least, I should not wish to be compared with him. Grinnell has incessantly appealed to the patriotism of the jury. To that I reply in the language of [Samuel] Johnson, the English litterateur, “an appeal to patriotism is the last resort of a scoundrel.”

My efforts in behalf of the disinherited and disfranchised millions, my agitation in this direction, the popularisation of economic teachings – in short, the education of the wage workers, is declared “a conspiracy against society.” The word “society” is here wisely substituted for “the State,” as represented by the Patricians of today. It has always been the opinion of the ruling classes that the people must be kept in ignorance, for they lose their servility, their modesty and their obedience to the powers that be, as their intelligence increases. The education of a black slave a quarter of a century ago was a criminal offense. Why? Because the intelligent slave would throw off his shackles at whatever cost. Why is the education of the working people of today looked upon by a certain class as an offense against the State? For the same reason! The State, however, wisely avoided this point in the prosecution of this case. From their testimony one is

forced to conclude that we had, in our speeches and publications, preached nothing else but destruction and dynamite. The court has this morning stated that there is no case in history like this. I have noticed, during this trial, that the gentlemen of the legal profession are not well versed in history. In all historical cases of this kind truth had to be perverted by the priests of the established power that was nearing its end.

What have we said in our speeches and publications?

We have interpreted to the people their conditions and relations in society. We have explained to them the different social phenomena and the social laws and circumstances under which they occur. We have, by way of scientific investigation, incontrovertibly proved and brought to their knowledge that the system of wages is the root of the present social iniquities – iniquities so monstrous that they cry to heaven. We have further said that the wage system, as a specific form of social development, would, by the necessity of logic, have to give way to higher forms of civilisation; that the wage system must furnish the foundation for a social system of co-operation – that is, *Socialism*. That whether this or that theory, this or that scheme regarding future arrangements were accepted was not a matter of choice, but one of historical necessity, and that to us the tendency of progress seemed to be *Anarchism* – that is, a free society without kings or classes – a society of sovereigns in which liberty and economic equality of all would furnish an unshakable equilibrium as a foundation for natural order.

It is not likely that the honourable Bonfield and Grinnell can conceive of a social order not held intact by the policeman’s club and pistol, nor of a free society without prisons, gallows, and State’s attorneys. In such a society they probably fail to find a place for themselves. And is this the reason why Anarchism is such a “pernicious and damnable doctrine?”

Grinnell has intimated to us that Anarchism was on trial. The theory of Anarchism belongs to the realm of speculative philosophy. There was not a syllable said about Anarchism at the Haymarket meeting. At that meeting the very popular theme of reducing the hours of toil was discussed. But, “Anarchism is on trial!” foams Mr. Grinnell. If that is the case, your honour, very well; you may sentence me, for I am an Anarchist. I believe with Buckle, with Paine, Jefferson, Emerson, and Spencer,<sup>1</sup> and many other great thinkers of this century,

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<sup>1</sup> Spies is referencing various famous radical liberals, presumably seeking to show anarchism was not some alien idea by linking it to “respectable” thinkers which the judge, jury and the public would have heard of: Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862) was an English historian, the author of an unfinished *History of Civilization in England* and a is sometimes called “the Father of Scientific History”; Thomas Paine (1737-1809) was an English-born American Founding Father, political activist, philosopher, political theorist, and

revolutionary. He wrote *Common Sense* (1776) and *Rights of Man* (1791); Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was an American statesman, diplomat, lawyer, architect, philosopher, and Founding Father who served as the third president of the United States. He was the primary author of the Declaration of Independence; Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was an American essayist, lecturer, philosopher, abolitionist, and poet. He seen as a champion of individualism; Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) was an English polymath active as a

that the state of castes and classes – the state where one class dominates over and lives upon the labour of another class, and calls this *order* – yes, I believe that this barbaric form of social organisation, with its legalised plunder and murder, is doomed to die, and make room for a free society, voluntary association, or universal brotherhood, if you like. You may pronounce the sentence upon me, honourable judge, but let the world know that in A. D. 1886, in the State of Illinois, eight men were sentenced to death, because they believed in a better future; because they had not lost their faith in the ultimate victory of liberty and justice!

“You have taught the destruction of society and civilisation,” says the tool and agent of the Bankers’ and Citizens’ Association, Grinnell. That man has yet to learn what civilisation is. It is the old, old argument against human progress. Read the history of Greece, of Rome; read that of Venice; look over the dark pages of the church, and follow the thorny path of science. “No change! No change! You would destroy society and civilisation!” has ever been the cry of the ruling classes. They are so comfortably situated under the prevailing system that they naturally abhor and fear even the slightest change. Their privileges are as dear to them as life itself, and every change threatens these privileges. But civilisation is a ladder whose steps are monuments of such changes! Without these social changes – all brought about against the will and the force of the ruling classes – there would be no civilisation. As to the destruction of society which we have been accused of seeking, sounds this not like one of Aesop’s fables – like the cunning of the fox? We, who have jeopardised our lives to save society from the fiend – the fiend who has grasped her by the throat; who sucks her life-blood, who devours her children – we, who would heal her bleeding wounds, who would free her from the fetters you have wrought around her; from the misery you have brought upon her – we her enemies!! Honourable judge, the demons of hell will join in the laughter this irony provokes!

“We have preached dynamite!” Yes, we have predicted from the lessons history teaches, that the ruling classes of today would no more listen to the voice of reason than their predecessors; that they would attempt by

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philosopher, psychologist, biologist, sociologist, and anthropologist. He originated the expression “survival of the fittest” and argued against state intervention. As the era’s

brute force to stay the wheels of progress. Is it a lie, or was it the truth we told? Are not the large industries of this once free country already conducted under the surveillance of the police, the detectives, the military and the sheriffs – and is this return to militancy not developing from day to day? American sovereigns – think of it – working like galley convicts under military guards! We have predicted this, and predict that soon these conditions will grow unbearable. What then? The mandate of the feudal lords of our time is slavery, starvation, and death! This has been their program for

years. We have said to the toilers, that science had penetrated the mystery of nature – that from Jove’s head once more has sprung a Minerva – dynamite! If this declaration is synonymous with murder, why not charge those with the crime to whom we owe the invention?

To charge us with an attempt to overthrow the present system on or about May 4, by force, and then establish Anarchy, is too absurd a statement, I think, even for a political office holder to make. If Grinnell believed that we attempted such a thing, why did he not have Dr. Bluthardt make an inquiry as to our sanity? Only mad men could have planned such a brilliant scheme, and mad people cannot be indicted or convicted of murder. If there had existed anything like

a conspiracy or a pre-arrangement, does your honour believe that events would not have taken a different course than they did on that evening and later? This “conspiracy” nonsense is based upon an oration I delivered on the anniversary of Washington’s birthday at Grand Rapids, Mich., more than a year and a half ago. I had been invited by the Knights of Labor for that purpose. I dwelt upon the fact that our country was far from being what the great revolutionists of the last century intended it to be. I said that those men, if they lived today, would clean the Augean stables with iron brooms, and that they, too, would undoubtedly be characterised as “wild Socialists.” It is not unlikely that I said Washington would have been hanged for treason if the revolution had failed. Grinnell made this “sacrilegious remark” his main arrow against me. Why? Because he intended to inveigh the know-nothing spirit against us. But who will deny the correctness of the statement? That I should have compared myself with

foremost champion of bourgeois individualism, Kropotkin critiqued his ideas on many occasions, including in *Modern Science and Anarchy* (1913). (*Black Flag*)

Washington, is a base lie. But if I had, would that be murder? I may have told that individual who appeared here as a witness that the workingmen should procure arms, as force would in all probability be the *ultima ratio regum*; and that in Chicago there were so and so many armed, but I certainly did not say that we proposed to “inaugurate the social revolution.” And let me say here: Revolutions are no more made than earthquakes and cyclones. Revolutions are the effect of certain causes and conditions. I have made social philosophy a specific study for more than ten years, and I could not have given vent to such nonsense! I do believe, however, that the revolution is near at hand – in fact, that it is upon us. But is the physician responsible for the death of the patient because he foretold that death? If any one is to be blamed for the coming revolution it is the ruling class who steadily refuses to make concessions as reforms become necessary; who maintain that they can call a halt to progress, and dictate a standstill to the eternal forces of which they themselves are but the whimsical creation.

[...]

Grinnell has repeatedly stated that our country is an enlightened country. The verdict fully corroborates the assertion! This verdict against us is the anathema of the wealthy classes over their despoiled victims – the vast army of wage workers and farmers. If your honour would not have these people believe this; if you would not have them believe that we have once more arrived at the Spartan Senate, the Athenian Areopagus, the Venetian Council of Ten, etc., then sentence should not be pronounced. But, if you think that by hanging us you can stamp out the labour movement – the movement from which the downtrodden millions, the millions who toil and live in want and misery, the wage slaves, expect salvation – if this is your opinion, then hang us! Here you will tread upon a spark, but here, and there, and behind you, and in front of you, and everywhere, flames will blaze up. It is a subterranean fire. You cannot put it out. The ground is on fire upon which you stand. You can’t understand it. You don’t believe in magical arts, as your grandfathers did, who burned witches at the stake, but you do believe in conspiracies; you believe that all these occurrences of late are the work of conspirators! You resemble the child that is looking for his picture behind the mirror. What you see, and what you try to grasp is nothing but the deceptive reflex of the stings of your bad conscience. You want to “stamp out the conspirators” – the “agitators?” Ah, stamp out every factory lord who has grown wealthy upon the

unpaid labour of his employees. Stamp out every landlord who has amassed fortunes from the rent of overburdened workingmen and farmers. Stamp out every machine that is revolutionising industry and agriculture, that intensifies the production, ruins the producer, that increases the national wealth, while the creator of all these things stands amidst them tantalised with hunger! Stamp out the railroads, the telegraph, the telephone, steam and yourselves – for everything breathes the revolutionary spirit.

You, gentlemen, are the revolutionists! You rebel against the effects of social conditions which have tossed you, by the fair hand of Fortune, into a magnificent paradise. Without inquiring, you imagine that no one else has a right in that place. You insist that you are the chosen ones, the sole proprietors. The forces that tossed you into the paradise, the industrial forces, are still at work. They are growing more active and intense from day to day. Their tendency is to elevate all mankind to the same level, to have all humanity share in the paradise you now monopolise. You, in your blindness, think you can stop the tidal wave of civilisation and human emancipation by placing a few policemen, a few gatling guns, and some regiments of militia on the shore – you think you can frighten the rising waves back into the unfathomable depths, whence they have arisen, by erecting a few gallows in the perspective. You, who oppose the natural course of things, *you* are the real revolutionists. *You* and *you* alone are the conspirators and destructionists!

[...]

“These men,” Grinnell said repeatedly, “have no principles; they are common murderers, assassins, robbers,” etc. I admit that our aspirations and objects are incomprehensible to unprincipled ruffians, but surely for this we are not to be blamed. The assertion, if I mistake not, was based upon the ground that we sought to destroy property. Whether this perversion of facts was intentional, I know not. But in justification of our doctrines I will say that the assertion is an infamous falsehood. Articles have been read here from the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and *Alarm* to show the dangerous characters of the defendants. The files of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and *Alarm* have been searched for the past years. Those articles which generally commented upon some atrocity committed by the authorities upon striking workingmen were picked out and read to you. Other articles were not read to the court. Other articles



were not what was wanted. The State's attorney (who well knows that he tells a falsehood when he says it), upon those articles asserts that "these men have no principles."

[...]

So Socialism does not mean the destruction of society. Socialism is a constructive and not a destructive science. While capitalism expropriates the masses for the benefit of the privileged class; while capitalism is that school of economics which teaches how one can

live upon the labour (i.e., property) of others; Socialism teaches how all may possess property, and further teaches that every man must work honestly for his own living, and not be playing the "respectable board of trade man," or any other highly (?) respectable business man or banker, such as appeared here as talesmen in the jurors' box, with the fixed opinion that we ought to be hanged. Indeed, I believe they have that opinion!

Socialism, in short, seeks to establish a universal system of co-operation, and to render accessible to each and every member of the human family the achievements and benefits of civilisation, which, under capitalism, are being

monopolised by a privileged class, and employed, not as they should be, for the common good of all, but for the brutish gratification of an avaricious class. Under capitalism the great inventions of the past, far from being a blessing for mankind, have been turned into a curse! Under Socialism the prophecy of the Greek poet, Antiporas, would be fulfilled, who, at the invention of the first water mill, exclaimed: "This is the emancipator of male and female slaves;" and likewise the prediction of Aristotle, who said: "When, at some future age, every tool, upon command or predestination, will perform its work as the art works of Daedalus did, which moved by themselves, or like the three feet of Hephaestos which went to their sacred work instinctively, when thus the weaver shuttles will weave by themselves, then we shall no longer have masters and slaves." Socialism says this time has come, and can you deny it? You say: "Oh, these heathens, what did they know?" True! They knew nothing of political economy, they knew nothing of

Christendom. They failed to conceive how nicely these men-emancipating machines could be employed to lengthen the hours of toil and to intensify the burdens of the slaves. These heathens, yes, they excused the slavery of the one on the ground that thereby another would be afforded the opportunity of human development. But to preach the slavery of the masses in order that a few rude and arrogant parvenues might become "eminent manufacturers," "extensive packing house owners," or "influential shoe black dealers" – to do this they lacked that specific Christian organ.

**Socialism teaches that the machines, the means of transportation and communication are the result of the combined efforts of society, past and present, and that they are therefore rightfully the indivisible property of society, just the same as the soil and the mines and all natural gifts should be.**

Socialism teaches that the machines, the means of transportation and communication are the result of the combined efforts of society, past and present, and that they are therefore rightfully the indivisible property of society, just the same as the soil and the mines and all natural gifts should be. This declaration implies that those who have appropriated this wealth wrongfully, though lawfully, shall be expropriated by society. The expropriation of the masses by the monopolists has reached such a degree that the expropriation of the expropriators has become an imperative necessity, an act of social self-preservation. Society will reclaim its own, even though

you erect a gibbet on every street corner. And Anarchism, this terrible "ism," deduces that under a co-operative organisation of society, under economic equality and individual independence, the State – the political State – will pass into barbaric antiquity. And we will be where all are free, where there are no longer masters and servants, where intellect stands for brute force; there will no longer be any use for the policemen and militia to preserve the so-called "peace and order" – the order that the Russian general spoke of when he telegraphed to the Czar after he had massacred half of Warsaw, "Peace reigns in Warsaw!"<sup>1</sup>

Anarchism does not mean bloodshed; does not mean robbery, arson, etc. These monstrosities are, on the contrary, the characteristic features of capitalism. Anarchism means peace and tranquillity to all. Anarchism, or Socialism, means the re-organisation of society upon scientific principles and the abolition of

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<sup>1</sup> This reflects an earlier discussion by Kropotkin — included as a chapter of *Words of a Rebel* entitled "Order" and translated as "Order and Anarchy: A Statement of the Principles of Capitalism and Anarchism" in *The Alarm* (13 December 1884) — in which he contrasted the "disorder" of the struggle for freedom by the many and the "order" of

oppression and exploitation by the few. Interestingly, Kropotkin later used the example of Warsaw in his article "The Coming Anarchy" (*The Nineteenth Century*, August 1887) and included by Albert Parsons in his book *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis* (page 126). (*Black Flag*)

causes which produce vice and crime. Capitalism first produces these social diseases and then seeks to cure them by punishment.

[...]

Now, if I had as much power as the court, and were a law-abiding citizen, I would certainly have the court indicted for some remarks made during this trial. I will say that if I had not been an Anarchist at the beginning of this trial I would be one now. I quote the exact language of the court on one occasion: "It does not necessarily follow that all laws are foolish and bad because a good many of them are so." That is treason, sir! if we are to believe the court and the State's attorney. But, aside from that, I cannot see how we shall distinguish the good from the bad laws. Am I to judge of that? No; I am not. But if I disobey a bad law, and am brought before a bad judge, I undoubtedly would be convicted.

[...]

Now, if we cannot be directly implicated with this affair, connected with the throwing of the bomb, where is the law that says, these men shall be picked out to suffer? Show me that law if you have it! If the position of the court is correct, then half of the population of this city ought to be hanged, because they are responsible the same as we are for that act on May 4. And if half of the population of Chicago is not hanged, then show me the law that says, "eight men shall be picked out and hanged as scapegoats!" You have no good law. Your decision, your verdict, our conviction is nothing but an arbitrary will of this lawless court. It is true there is no precedent in jurisprudence in this case! It is true we have called upon the people to arm themselves. It is true that we told them time and again that the great day of change was coming. It was not our desire to have bloodshed. We are not beasts. We would not be Socialists if we were beasts. It is because of our

sensitiveness that we have gone into this movement for the emancipation of the oppressed and suffering. It is true we have called upon the people to arm and prepare for the stormy times before us.

This seems to be the ground upon which the verdict is to be sustained. "But when a long train of abuses and usurpations pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce the people under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government and provide new guards for their future safety." This is a quotation from the Declaration of Independence. Have we broken any laws by showing to the people how these abuses, that have occurred for the last twenty years, are invariably pursuing one object, viz: to establish an *oligarchy* in this country so strong and powerful and monstrous as never before has existed in any country? I can well understand why that man Grinnell did not urge upon the grand jury to charge us with treason. I can well understand it. You cannot try and convict a man for treason who has upheld the constitution against those who trample it under their feet. It would not have been as easy a job to do that, Mr. Grinnell, as to charge these men with murder.

Now, these are my ideas. They constitute a part of myself. I cannot divest myself of them, nor would I, if I could. And if you think that you can crush out these ideas that are gaining ground more and more every day; if you think you can crush them out by sending us to the gallows; if you would once more have people suffer the penalty of death because they have dared to tell the truth – and I defy you to show us where we have told a lie – I say, if death is the penalty for proclaiming the truth, then I will proudly and defiantly pay the costly price! Call your hangman! Truth crucified in Socrates, in Christ, in Giordano Bruno, in Huss, in Galileo, still lives – they and others whose number is legion have preceded us on this path. We are ready to follow!

**The factory, the ignominious regulations, the surveillance, the spy system, the servility and lack of manhood among the workers and the arrogant arbitrary behaviour of the boss and his associates-all this made an impression upon me that I have never been able to divest myself of. At first I could not understand why the workers, among them many old men with bent backs, silently and without a sign of protest bore every insult the caprice of the foreman or boss would heap upon them. I was not then aware of the fact that the opportunity to work was a privilege, a favour, and that it was in the power of those who were in the possession of the factories and instruments of labour to deny or grant this privilege. I did not then understand how difficult it was to find a purchaser for one's labour. I did not know then that there were thousands and thousands of idle human bodies in the market, ready to hire out upon most any conditions, actually begging for employment...**

– "Autobiography of August Spies", *The Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs* (1887)



# Adolph Fischer

## Address to the Court

### Adolph Fischer

*The Accused the Accusers: Famous Speeches of the Chicago Anarchists in Court* (Chicago: Socialistic Publishing Society, 1886)

YOUR HONOUR: You ask me why sentence of death should not be passed upon me. I will not talk much. I will only say that I protest against my being sentenced to death, because I have committed no crime. I was tried here in this room for murder, and I was convicted of Anarchy. I protest against being sentenced to death, *because I have not been found guilty of murder.* However, if I am to die on account of being an Anarchist, on account of my love for liberty, fraternity and equality, I will not remonstrate. If death is the penalty for our love of freedom of the human race, then I say openly I have forfeited my life; but a murderer I am not. Although being one of the parties who arranged the Haymarket meeting, I had no more to do with the throwing of that bomb, I had no more connection with it than State's Attorney Grinnell had. I do not deny that I was present at the Haymarket meeting, but that meeting—

(At this point Mr. Salomon stepped up and spoke to Mr. Fischer in a low tone, but the latter waved him off and said:)

Mr. Salomon, be so kind. I know what I am talking about. Now, that Haymarket meeting was not called for the purpose of committing violence and crime. No; but the meeting was called for the purpose of protesting against the outrages and crimes committed by the police on the previous day, out at McCormick's. The State's witness, Waller, and others have testified here, and I only need to repeat it, that we had a meeting on Monday night, and at this meeting — the affair at McCormick's taking place just a few hours previous — took action and called a mass-meeting for the purpose of protesting against the brutal outrages of the police. Waller was chairman of this meeting, and he himself made the motion to hold the meeting at the Haymarket. It was also he who appointed me as a committee to have handbills printed and to provide for speakers; that I did, and nothing else. The next day I went to Wehrer & Klein, and had 25,000 handbills printed, and I invited Spies to speak at the Haymarket meeting. In the original



**Adolph Fischer (1858-1887)**

of the "copy" I had the line "Workingmen, appear armed!" and my reason for putting those words in was because I didn't want the workingmen to be shot down in that meeting as on other occasions. But as those circulars were printed, or as a few of them were printed and brought over to me at the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* office, my Comrade Spies saw one of them. I had invited him to speak before that. He showed me the circular, and said: "Well, Fischer, if those circulars are distributed, I won't speak." I admitted it would be better to take the objectionable words out, and Mr. Spies spoke. And that is all I had to do with that meeting. Well, I went to the Haymarket

about 8:15 o'clock, and stayed there until Parsons interrupted Fielden's speech. Parsons stepped up to the stand, and said that it looked like it was going to rain, and that the assembly had better adjourn to Zepf's Hall. At that moment a friend of mine who testified on the witness stand, went with me to Zepf's Hall, and we sat down at a table and had a glass of beer. At the moment I was going to sit down, my friend Parsons came in with some other persons, and after I was sitting there about five minutes the explosion occurred. I had no idea that anything of the kind would happen, because, as the State's witnesses testified themselves, there was no agreement to defend ourselves that night. It was only a meeting called to protest.

Now, as I said before, this verdict, which was rendered by the jury in this room, is not directed against murder, but against Anarchy. I feel that I am sentenced, or that I will be sentenced, to death because of being an Anarchist, and not because I am a murderer. I have never been a murderer. I have never yet committed a crime in my life; but I know a certain man who is on the way to becoming a murderer, an assassin, and that man is Grinnell — the State's Attorney Grinnell — because he brought men on the witness stand who he knew would swear falsely; and I publicly denounce Mr. Grinnell as a murderer and assassin if I should be executed. But if the

ruling class thinks that by executing us, hanging a few Anarchists, they can crush out Anarchy, they will be badly mistaken, because the Anarchist loves his principles better than his life. An Anarchist is always ready to die for his principles; but in this case I have been charged with murder, and I am not a murderer. You will find it impossible to kill a principle, although you may take the life of men who confess these principles. The more the believers in just causes are

persecuted, the quicker will their ideas be realised. For instance, in rendering such an unjust and barbarous verdict, the twelve “honourable” men in the jury box have done more for the furtherance of Anarchism than the convicted could have accomplished in a generation. This verdict is a death-blow against free speech, free press, and free thought in this country, and the people will be conscious of it, too. This is all I care to say.

## A Chicago Anarchist on Anarchy

Adolph Fischer

*Liberty* (Boston), 26 February 1887

Dear Comrade Lum:

It occurs to me as if our Social Democratic friend M. has ceased corresponding with me on the subject of Anarchism vs. State Socialism. I hope I have not offended him. If you should cross his path, please tell him so. I wrote in my last letter to him that I understood the real issue to be: “centralism vs. decentralism,” and that State Socialism and capitalism represented the one side of the question, and Anarchism the other. No doubt, thus placing our Social Democratic friend in the same line with the capitalists has offended him a little, for he is quite as energetic an enemy of the present order of things as I am or you are; but, to speak the truth, isn't this really a fact? M.'s hobby-horse is his suggestion that “without State and law a general confusion would prevail and everybody would do as he pleases.” The first part of this sentence is pure imagination, but, as to the last part, that's exactly what we want. We want a state of society where an individual “can do what he pleases.” At the first glance this assertion sounds a little bold, but I insist upon its correctness. The advocates of the maintenance of the State, of centralistic society, in arguing the necessity of authority, look upon things through the spectacles of custom and prejudice; they think that men, or at least a number of men, are naturally evil disposed and born criminals, and I claim that this is not so. Examine the history of crime, and you will find that all crimes, all outrages upon society, can be traced back to the infamous *institution* of private property, to the enslavement of men by men, – in short, to the unjust organization of society. I defied M. to name a single exception. Men, as a rule, cannot be different from what the influences under which they live compel them to be; men are but the reflex of the circumstances which surround them. Civilized men, when free (certainly, I allude not to such “freedom” as

we American “sovereigns” enjoy), – *i.e.*, when their right to live is not encroached upon by others, – would have no earthly reason or desire to do wrong to their fellow-men, say just for amusement or pastime. Only persons with defective brains, maniacs, would do this under these circumstances, and society would know how to take care of such mentally sick people as well as

it does of people with bodily diseases. If this, however, should be the case; if the human race cannot be ennobled; if the human being is below the standard of a wild beast, – then we should give up our struggle for the emancipation of mankind; then it would be better that Mother Nature should bring her forces into play and wipe such a damnable race from the face of the earth, without giving a second Noah a chance to escape; as was the case – so a legend tells us – at the time of the deluge. But, comrade Lum, I am not a pessimist: I know

that the time is not very distant when humanity will give credit to its name, when the human family will live happily, when no member thereof will place obstacles in the way of free development of others, thus keeping them in subjection and misery.

What the Anarchists want to abolish is authority, the rule of men over men, – *i.e.*, the State. Authority presupposes submission, and the outcome of this is a tyranny. Tyranny is damnable under any circumstances, no matter whether it is organised by one man or by a majority over a minority. If you, for instance, are robbed, it makes no difference to you whether the robbing party consists of one man or a thousand; the fact would remain that you are robbed, and you would feel it in one instance just as keenly as in the other. And so it is with the oppressed.

**What the Anarchists want to abolish is authority, the rule of men over men, – *i.e.*, the State. Authority presupposes submission, and the outcome of this is a tyranny.**

Now, friend Lum, just think of a Socialistic State! Such an hermaphrodite would necessitate, if not the same, then at least similar machinery to that used today. There would be, in the first place, the inevitable law-manufactories, legislative assemblies. As laws are most decidedly enacted to be enforced against somebody, and as this again necessitates individuals who act as executive spirits, we have again the pleasure to see the historical policeman as he lives and thrives. Sheriffs, judges, mayors, and other “servants of the people,” without whom a State cannot exist, would also be in their glory again.

Any Social Democrat cannot possibly overlook the fact that a Socialistic State would divide society into two classes, as well as the State of today. Instead of the *bourgeoisie* and *proletariat* of the present State, the Socialistic State would consist of a distinct bureaucracy and the toiling masses. “But,” say our Social Democratic sophists, “the main mission of the State is to control and regulate the production and consumption. You Anarchists want individualism, decentralization, to rule supreme, and this means that everybody should isolate himself, that a man should produce in isolation, – *i. e.*, make his own shoes, clothing, frying-pan, sausages, night-cap, toothbrush furniture, etc., and build his own house.” Nonsense! The Anarchists do not advocate such fiddle-faddle, but nevertheless this talk in opposition to Anarchism is stereotypical. Individualism means not that a man should hide himself, should avert the society of his fellowmen, – in short, isolate himself. It is a natural impulse in men to associate with their fellowmen. Indeed, a human being would be most unhappy had he not intercourse with other members of his race. Held the Anarchists such views, why, then they ought to be sent to some asylum as misanthropes.

Far from being isolated in an Anarchistic form of society, the individuals would associate into organizations for various purposes, and, first of all, for the purpose of production and consumption. A man would really be an idiot, would he produce single-handed, perhaps fourteen or sixteen hours a day, when, by cooperating with others, he can accomplish a better result in the fifth part of that time, perhaps two or three hours. Common sense would thus induce a man to cooperate with others, and voluntary cooperation with others for the attainment of a certain purpose does by no means exclude individualism.

It occurs to me that the eventual establishment of a Socialistic State would not end the social troubles, and that hostilities would break out anew, perhaps not immediately after the removal of the capitalistic State, but at least in future generations. The bureaucracy, the machinery of State, would try to maintain the State under any circumstances, just as the ruling class in the modern State does, even should a majority in time become opposed to centralized society, thus necessitating a second bloody struggle, a second revolution. Therefore: Hasten the downfall of the capitalistic State *and proclaim individualism, i. e., absolute personal liberty.*

But, comrade Lum, I remember just now that I am writing this letter to an Anarchist, whose views are quite identical with mine; I had imagined, in my ardour, that I was corresponding with our friend M.

Yours fraternally,

Adolph Fischer  
Cook County Jail, Chicago, February 1, 1887

## Letter to Lloyd and Salter

### Adolph Fischer

Cook Co. Jail, Nov. 4, 1887.<sup>1</sup>

Messrs. H. D. Lloyd and W. M. Salter:

Gentlemen: — Your communication was handed me yesterday. As I have told you before, anarchism and force as such are contrary to each other. But we deny that any individual has the right to curtail the liberty and rights of others. The *oppressed* have the natural right to use force against their oppressors; or, to speak with Jefferson, force is justified as a defence of the rights of men. In accordance with this principle, the Constitution of the United States says that the right of the citizens to bear arms is inviolable. No *thinking man* will deny that the present condition of society is not bearable much longer. We stand before a radical transformation of society. Will those whom the peculiar state of society gives such enormous advantages give up their privileges peaceably? This is the question. If the anarchists would be convinced of this they would be the happiest of men. But from all observations they conclude that the privileged classes will not give way to reason, but will uphold their privileges by force, and that therefore a general conflict between the diametrical classes is inevitable. In this connection it was that the anarchists warned the people to be ready for the storm and to defend their rights.

Yours truly,  
Adolph Fischer

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Augusta Lloyd, *Henry Demarest Lloyd, 1847-1903, A Biography* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), I: 88-9.

# Lizzie M. Swank<sup>1</sup>

## Abolition of Government

Lizzie M. Swank

*The Alarm*, 23 January 1886

Many really sincere and radical People are as yet puzzled by the position the anarchists take, namely: The abolition of all governments. Such abolition suggests to them no idea, except that of disorder, confusion and inharmony, and they cannot conceive of a well regulated, peaceful society apart from some form of "government"; State socialists, whose idea of organisation is, after all scarcely different from that of anarchists still insist in calling this organisation "government," and regard anarchists as advocates of chaos, because we see no use for authority on the word "government."

But the general idea of State socialism in America today is not what it was five years ago. Then, the State was an organisation of everything under one head, an entirety, a power. It owned everything, received rents, paid wages in the favour of labour certificates, and was the employees of every person within its limits. State socialism today seems to mean a general organisation of the different departments of society, with a vague sort of centralisation somewhere, that hasn't much to do. It says through one of its advocates that the mail department has nothing to do with the local laws of Chicago, the revenue department, with the school board of another city, the Indian bureau with the New York water works, etc., under the present government and need not interfere with each other under any government. So that, the only difference between us is, that while we may admit the necessity of school boards, water works committees and bureaus of various works, we see no use for a power; a centralisation above all these to which all the widely differing departments must be subject.

The words "the people" and "government" never have been identical in the whole history of the world and in their very nature never can be. Government means a power centred in one person or a set of persons, capable



**Lizzie M. Swank (1850-1926)**

of making laws and punishing all violations of them. Whether born to this power, and regularly anointed by "the will of God," or placed there by the so-called will of the people, is immaterial so far as results go. A government must consist of legislative and executive power, or it is no government. The most democratic form has its body of law-makers, passing laws for the control and guidance of every kind of people, in every department of industry, in almost every relation in life, whether it has any knowledge of these people and their interests or not. It has its courts, judges,

lawyers and constables; back of these, and supporting them, its station-houses, bridewells, jails and prisons; and yet behind these, well-trained police, soldiers, Winchester rifles and Gatlin guns.

If we examine ever so closely the nature and necessity of government, with all its inseparable machinery, we can trace it no farther than its root and origin – *private property*. The first barbaric chieftain who wished to keep more property than he could protect with his own brute strength was the first to see the necessity of a government. And ever since, barons and lords who wanted to control more territory than their vassals could protect, kings and monarchs who wanted to "own the earth," and great only in their ability to make the common people kill each other, land kings and capitalists who want to grasp a million times more of earth's gifts than they can use, all believe in the absolute necessity of government. It is a mighty machine made ready for their use, by which they can accomplish what they never could unaided and alone. Human beings could never have held millions of other human beings in bondage for ages without this ingenious contrivance; miles of fertile land could never be held out of the reach of idle hands and hungry stomachs without it; nor could rich mines, great factories, machinery and other triumphs of human labour and skill, stand unused and wasted while strong

<sup>1</sup> Lizzie M. Swank (1850-1926) was an American anarchist, writer, and organiser of Chicago's working women during the late 19th century. She was a key figure in Chicago's labour movement in the years just preceding the Haymarket affair, playing a leading role in the Knights of Labor and the International Working People's Association. She was the assistant editor of *The Alarm*. In November 1885, she married fellow anarchist William Holmes. (*Black Flag*)

arms were aching to get at them, and needy humanity suffering for their productions. The whole province and office of government is to protect private property – nothing else. Its relations to foreign powers always relates in some way to the private interest of its merchants and money kings. Its civil courts are merely to settle questions of private property; its criminal courts to punish people who want private-property and haven't succeeded in getting any; its charters and grants are to enable individuals to monopolise nature's gifts and man's labour, as they could not possibly do without them; its prisons to terrify the people it has assisted in robbing.

What else is government? Strip it of authority; power to bestow privileges and ability to punish, and what is there left? There would be organisation of the industries, production and distribution, national questions, etc., we will say.

Every necessary organisation, committee or regulation, which the welfare of communities demands, will naturally exist, but the different departments need not interfere with each other and there need be no higher power above and over them. The people of all the groups need not vote on questions concerning only one; and no one set of men need make laws to control the conduct of farmers, tailors, shoemakers, artists, authors, and all sorts of people indiscriminately.

“National questions” are myths. They are simply relics of sectional pride, founded on private property interests.

As individuals are now placed where they must endeavour to gain advantages over each other, so portions of the earth's territory have individualised themselves, and are constantly trying to outwit and conquer the rest; but it is all a part of the old private property competitive system: True internationalists have no need for such sentiments.

**With no *ownership* of  
the means of life  
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economically and  
politically.**

“National boundaries,” “state lines,” etc., are only part of a cut-throat system – essential accompaniments to the feeling fostered by kings and rich despoilers, which makes the poor wretch on one side of the road willing to murder his equally wretched brother on the other side because they happen to have different masters.

Humanitarian questions there may be; national ones, never, when we once truly learn that throughout the world we are brothers.

National questions with national boundary lines and governments, will, in the coming new civilisation be forever abolished, and in their place will be left universal, voluntary co-operation, local regulations and organisation of the different groups of industry. With no *ownership* of the means of life there can be no poverty. Poverty banished, crime will become unknown, and the individual will be *free*, socially, economically and politically.

## **“Timid” Capital L.M.S.**

*The Alarm*, 20 March 1886

The *Times* of Sunday gives a pretty fair account of the labour agitation and the industrial situation generally, with interviews from prominent Anarchists and Socialists. But it is doubtful whether either Joseph Greenbut or the Internationalists feel flattered with the close connection the report attributes to them; other labour agitators are also called Anarchists, who do not represent Anarchy, and who do not wish to be so presented to the public. However a great many excellent ideas have been given wide circulation, and Socialistic agitation advanced, in spite of the reporter's deductions, i.e. that, while there seems to be no remedy for the wrongs of which labour complains, laborers and agitators “only hurt their cause by making capital timid, and thus creating a greater scarcity of work.”

It does not seem possible one could read Comrade Fielden or Parson's statements and deliberately write the above during a lucid interval. What does a Socialist care how “timid” capital becomes? Or, how scarce “work” grows, when he knows “jobs” will become more and more rare, and idle men more and more plentiful, under the advancing growth of the system? A wonderful threat this, with which to frighten Revolutionists!

The more timid capital becomes the better; and it will soon find there is no safe place for it, except as John Swinton puts it, “in a hole in the ground, with the owner watching the hole.” Not there, even, when the government ceases to guard the owner in his watch, and never will, until it becomes what it rightfully is – *not* the

private property of a few individuals, but the common heritage of all.

Do they imagine that a general investment of private capital in enterprises insuring universal employment would satisfy a Socialist? Or that a threatened cessation of investment would frighten us into silence? How perversely, they misunderstand. Stupidity, worshipping in a dull way at the shrine of "Capital," imagines that the greatest blessing common man can expect is a *chance* to slave ten hours a day for two hour's pay, and

anything that threatens this chance is an impending calamity.

But socialists know that humanity wants, not work so much, but the *products* of work. Humanity isn't craving hard toil ten hours of every twenty-four, but rather leisure to grow and expand, and for every two hours labour full two hours' results. Place capital, which means the earth, the means of life, tools, machinery and scientific knowledge where it should be, and we will not risk its becoming "timid" enough to hurt anybody.

## Peacemakers

L.M.S.

*The Alarm*, 24 April 1886

The sum total of needless human suffering is so vast that one grand annihilating sweep of everything would be better than a continuance of the present state of affairs. But there is hope this side of annihilation, if we are not overwhelmed numerically by "peace reformers." The people are willing to fight their way to freedom as has been shown by recent events; but when along with their enemies and all the conservative elements there arises the cry from professed friends and leaders, "Peace, peace! Let there be no violence! Be patient, workers!" the people are nonplussed, perplexed, and know not what to do.

They have suffered. long and patiently. They have seen their oppressors preparing for war when no enemy was in sight but their own oppressed, patient selves, and still they were "peaceable."

They have obeyed the authority of church and state and remained "law abiding, Christian citizens," under a system which recognizes in them nothing but their

toiling capacities. But even a worm will turn when trodden upon, and the people aroused at last to a sense of the injustice they were enduring, were bravely marching on to a victory when at their heels and all about them comes the cry "no violence, no violence, my friends," and they are routed. The people must endure, but must never resist.

They may be crushed if the crushing is done by a government or by capital legally and respectably, but even "friends" grow horror stricken if they use any effective means of throwing off the weight which crushes them.

When will they learn that "force" is more righteous when used to right wrongs than in enslaving man! The old idea that whatever is done by government or privileged individuals is "respectable," "legal" and just, has a deep hold upon custom-ridden society. This is why sledge-hammer blows must be struck at the sacredness of law, authority and rulership.

## What Are "American Institutions"?

Lizzie M. Swank

*The Commonweal*, 16 July 1887

I am sending this across the ocean, to seek information I cannot gain in my own native land. I have enquired of leading journals and been quietly ignored; I have asked eminent literary people and received only looks that questioned my sanity and civilised citizenship; I have interrogated workingmen, and they simply become terrified. I have decided to enquire of a "blasted furriner." I only want to know – "what are "American institutions"? Or rather, what are the characteristics of American institutions which distinguish them from English, Russian, German, or French institutions? So much seems to depend on a proper attitude toward these revered mysteries, that I am anxious to be informed.

"If we would preserve the integrity of our American institutions, we must put a stop to all this anarchistic

talk from the labouring classes," shrieks the great American press. "If we would preserve, etc., etc., we must prevent the foreigners from crowding to our shores," scream the lesser lights of journalism in grand responsive chorus. "If we would p. t. i. o. o. A. i.," yells the Citizens' Association, "we must hang the men who find any fault with them." And then the solos and duets come in from the states: Kansas cries, "Imprison those who marry themselves without a priest, and guard the morals of our people by laws – Sunday laws, prohibitory laws, plenty of laws of all sorts." Pennsylvania and Ohio sing together, "Arrest the agitators – let no anarchists be heard." Virginia cries, "Shut up that earnest old woman who is shocking society with unwelcome truths;" and Illinois, bolder than all the rest, disarms her citizens, forbids the



discontented to murmur, makes it a crime to tell of the people's wrongs, passes "conspiracy," "boycott," and "strike" bills, forbids the singing of the song that thrills all Europe with its liberty tones, disperses meetings of citizens at her pleasure, and enforces her commands with an army of Pinkerton brutes, regiments of State militia, the most powerful police system in the world, and the dark shadow of the gallows in the background; growling in the meantime continually, "We are preserving the integrity of our American institutions."

During the great trial and since, somebody is always saying "Spies, Schwab, Engel, Fischer, and Ling, coming from a foreign land, and seeing poverty existed here as elsewhere, and *not understanding our American institutions*, became anarchists and iconoclasts – wanting to destroy society merely because they could not comprehend its organisation"!

I am as American as a person can be who is not a full-blooded, copper-coloured Indian. My forefathers were here before we had any "institutions," and helped to fight a foreign institution that we might have some of our own. I am as near civilised as my fellow-workers, and have average intelligence, and yet at this date I do not understand our "American institutions." I once thought I did; I believed the ballot was one of them. I have seen working-men carried to the polls and voted like so many cattle by their employers, when they knew and cared nothing about the two candidates offered them. I have seen a struggling labour party beaten again and again by fraud and trickery; and I have been told that in England and Germany popular suffrage is really a power and the people make themselves felt through it. So that the privilege of ballot is not peculiar to America surely.

One time I believed equality was one of them. But when I see a nabob drawing an income of seven dollars a

minute, living on the greatest luxuries of earth and holding at his beck and call the services of ten thousand men, and know that because of him there are a thousand paupers in the land, I must give up that idea. "Free homes" figured in my imagination as one. But it costs the best years of one man and woman's life and banishment from all they have held dear to win a home, at best; and usually it costs years of toil and deprivation just to *try*; while the mortgage-holder and usurer gets the "home" in the end.

But to the last I fondly dreamed that free thought, free speech, and free press were certainly American institutions. My experience as a citizen of Chicago has dispelled that illusion. In the whole world outside of Russia there is not a more oppressed, authority-ridden city than Chicago. The police are feared as though they were demons. Meetings are broken up, Anarchists are forbidden to sit or stand in groups of two or three, the "Marseillaise" is forbidden, men can be hung without proof for what somebody else did, and working men have no rights which a capitalist is bound to respect. All this for the "preservation of American institutions." What are they? Our free school system? They have better schools in other countries for all the children. Our old chattel-slavery institution? That perhaps was peculiar to America. Our land-owning, "big-rent," speculating institutions? They are common as civilisation itself. Our wage-slavery system? Our "peasantry" works as cheaply and obediently as any in the world. Our "profit" system? Men can roll up bigger fortunes through unlimited profit when once they get the upper hand by vested rights, and this perhaps is particularly American?

Can our English friends inform us what American institutions are?

Chicago, June 18<sup>th</sup>

## **A Word on Martyrs' Mistakes**

**L. M. S.**

*The Alarm*, 11 February 1888

### **A Woman's Comment on a Man's Sentimentality and Long-Range Sympathy.**

There should be no more of mere sentiment and gush concerning the martyrdom of our comrades from writers and speakers who claim to be fighting for freedom and justice. Either they believe in their innocence and the injustice of their sentences or they do not, and beautiful laudations and flowery eulogies do not set well with paltry excuses for their "mistakes" or vague suggestions that justice would have been better attained if their punishment had been a little less severe. What advantage to our cause comes from such conglomeration? A Talmage or Field could say as much. A Gary or a Grinnell could say they were brave men, they were intelligent men, they were men who

seem devoted to an idea they thought a true one, and that their deaths were heroic, and yet not injure their positions in the least. Indeed, Gary paid them a compliment something like this.

Is a professed agitator assisting the cause by blossoming out in beautiful literary roses with a sharp thorn peeping from beneath every one? If he merely wishes to grace the English language let him choose another subject and leave our martyrs to those who believe in them.

"Our boys" were indicted and tried for murder. Because they held certain opinions dangerous to the existence of the privileged classes a perjured judiciary, against all

evidence, sentenced and executed them for a murder of which the most malicious among them knows they were not guilty. Either one believes this is a monstrous injustice and a blow at free thought and free speech or he does not. If he does our martyrs "mistakes" have nothing to do with the question and should not be dragged in with their praises. It at least is not supposed that the "mistakes" palliated the terrible wrong or excused the class that took their lives. If one does not believe let him abuse or keep a shamed silence, as do the powers that be since their mighty deed was done, and at least be consistent.

They made no "mistakes" in their public efforts for humanity; the very things which are deemed "mistakes" are what they clung to with all the glorious intelligence

and determination of their grand natures to the last. They sealed those "mistakes" with their lives. They never retracted, or repented, or faltered in their convictions, and if one step in their course while toiling for liberty was a mistake, then that noble meeting of death, which the enthusiasm of their belief but intensified, was also a grand "mistake."

And who is to judge how much of the truths of liberty they understood? "By their fruits shall ye know them." When there can be shown a "wiser understanding" that has accomplished the work, that has spread the light, shaken society to its very centre, and consecrated that work with a martyr's death, as have these our beloved brothers, we will meekly bow our heads to that superior "understanding." But not until then.

## The Vital Question

**Lizzie M. S. Holmes**

*The Commonweal*, 29 June 1889

In the present phase of the labour movement, the philosophic or argumentative aspect is most prominent. At least it is so in America. I am reluctant to say that the old spirit of devotion – the determination, desperate courage, and whole-souled anxiety to *work* in the cause that fearlessness of conventionalism, and utter disregard of the opinions of the "respectable" element, which characterised the agitators of twelve, seven, and four years ago – have utterly died out. But these qualities are not conspicuous. The worker "with a job" is apathetic and obedient, for he doesn't want to lose it; the man without one is discouraged, hopeless, enfeebled, his highest ambition to get a "steady position." The one-time agitator who gave his time, strength, and pennies, almost day and night, looks on this strange dead quiet, and thinks for the time being he may as well be looking out for himself a little until the people are ready for him.

In the meantime the polite discussion of economic questions is becoming quite a "fad." No first-class magazine is without its article on an industrial subject, by some high-sounding Prof., who knows nothing whatever of genuine work. No pulpit but devotes a Sunday now and then to the "labour question" and the "labouring classes." No rostrum but is open to a dainty handling of the working-man's cause, with kid gloves, and where now and then a bare-handed lover of truth walks in and shakes up their aesthetic nerves with a few wholesome criticisms. Debating societies, clubs, associations, where the air is redolent with "culture" and opulence, exist, whose members dive as deeply into the economic sea as though after a new idea in art or an old one in *bric-a-brac*. There are clubs which give weekly banquets, and where, over plates that are spread at a cost of five dollars a-head, they discuss "eight hours," "single tax," "free land," and "wages" as glibly as though these things did not mean the destruction of their privileges.

Not long since, one of our oldest and ablest agitators had the floor on a question of labour in a society where Julius S. Grinnell presided as chairman! Such a fact either shows up mighty well for Grinnell or very bad for the agitator. I think many of our truest men and women *could not* speak and address that atrocious perjurer and murderer with calmness or patience on any subject.

The old time Radicals are in the meantime too much inclined to discussing different "schools of Socialism," philosophic points of difference, definition of terms, and "hair-splitting." A few have established a society with a creed almost as close as a close-union Baptist's, and all not subscribing to those principles have no right to call themselves Socialists, and "do so at their peril."

Of course this general discussion of economic questions must result in good; a greater number of people will arrive at some inkling of the truth; but there is danger, under this veil of respectability and mild arrangement of societary wrongs, that the great *urgency* of the question, the *keen, living importance* of its settlement to all humanity, will be forgotten – glossed over with cultured conventionalism – lost in a labyrinth of 'isms and abstractions. We may not all agree on the finely drawn differences as to what constitutes "personal liberty." We may differ as to the efficacy of "eight hours," "single tax," "mutual bank," or individual co-operative schemes. We may cherish lingering affections for the State, and hope it will yet steer us out of poverty and slavery; or we may be certain there is no hope as long as legalised Authority holds sway. But there are some things we can all agree on, and some we ought never for a moment to forget.

We all agree that the earth is for man; without it he must die. His birth right is as much of the natural elements as he needs; and when he is robbed of these and made to



toil for his necessary share, he is robbed of so much of his life. We know that human labour applied to nature's resources *alone* creates wealth. We know that the labourer is wronged when in every land he is poor, helpless, dependent, duped and enslaved, instead of being in the enjoyment of his productions, walking upright and free before his fellow-creatures. We know that his deplorable condition is due to established and lawful systems in society, continuous methods, ever increasing in disproportionate results, recognised and accepted ways and means of production and distribution. We know that the present standard of right, which does not recognise every man's need and right to the land, nor to the full results of his labour, is working most terrible suffering among the human race, when there is literally no excuse for poverty on the face of the bountiful earth. We all know, but we do not realise it, that all the boasted advantages of civilisation are obtained at a fearful cost of human suffering.

And *this* is what we ought never to forget.

If we are comfortable – shut up in cosy rooms away from wan and hungry faces, we can easily discuss tweedledee and tweedledum. The bricks of houses do not show the drops of blood from little children's rasped arms that carried them. The coal that burns so cheerily in the grates bears no mark of the drudgery and agony of men and women's lives, the wasted youth of hopeless children; nor do the ghosts of the dead, sacrificed in its procuring, peer out from the blue dancing flames. The comfortable clothing we wear carries no stain of the tears dropped from weary eyes at midnight, the stitches tell no tales of the worn lives and faded youth sewn into the seams.

Our cosy tea-table bears no mark of the gambler's art; the crisp loaves tell no story of the farmer's unrequited toil, his mortgaged farm, nor of the bursting elevators and full bank vaults of "brokers," manipulators of the world's food. Sitting quietly at home, we realise nothing of the many men wandering homeless, hopeless, friendless; of the uncared youth, to whom no pathway is

open but the road to crime and prison life; of the hungry children, whose wan pleading faces seem asking why they were born to suffer so.

But, bringing these dismal facts home to ourselves, I do not mean that we should be charitable – go out and feed a few hungry people, or save one or two boys from jail; if we did this we but make room for more. The causes beneath the surface of society continuously produce such results; the seething pool of injustice and corruption is constantly making wrecks of human beings, and casting them up as mere driftwood. The

whole of societary arrangements must be changed, and soon, or civilisation will go backward. While we are philosophising, the most terrible suffering is going on; the degraded are becoming more degraded, the poor poorer, and the ruling classes wealthier and more greedy.

It is well enough to cry "Patience!" when you are not

in the fire. One can wait for the slow growth of better conditions if one is never hungry; but how can we look out upon the gaunt, woeful, hardening faces that peer at us from the highways and byways, from dark cellars, from factory doors, and from frightful mining shafts, and still cry "Patience!"? How can we *feel* "patient," when knowing that this repressed, smothered, smoothed-over crater of wrong, suffering, and discontent, must burst forth into more terrible ebullitions than anything the world has ever seen if the present course is pursued?

The only hope there is, is that a general sense of "danger" may be infused among intelligent people; there is little time for waiting, for patience, or for philosophising. Not that I would stop the discussion of economic subjects, be they discussed ever so mildly and politely; but I would urge upon the already converted the necessity of more determination, more zeal for work, more of the spirit of self-sacrifice, less regard for respectable and conventional observances, and more for the truth, and a keener sense of the importance of *the vital question*.

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## **The Vital Question Again**

**Lizzie M. Holmes**

*The Commonweal*, 28 September 1889

Some of your readers on this western side of the waters have misunderstood the drift of "A Vital Question," and think the writer advocates palliatives, reliefs, etc. How such a meaning came to be construed from the words I do not know; for certainly, to me, all ameliorative measures, charities, plasters of any kind, are only less

mischievous than the exploiting schemes which make such things *seem* plausible. In urging on the attention of every thoughtful person the extreme misery which exists among the masses of the common people, there is no purpose of calling out temporary aid from the tender-hearted; it is impossible to take care of the driftwood as

fast as the whirlpool of greed and corruption casts it up, and I would not attempt it while the whirlpool is there. Even the “homes,” “reliefs,” and “institutions” which succour a few of the despoiled victims are mere conscience-salves, and serve, as well, to keep the wretched creatures from crowding too thickly around the luxurious palaces of the rich; and then, in the eyes of many, charity is a splendid substitute for justice.

I do not even urge political zeal. I do not believe the people can vote themselves bread and freedom, against a power which protects itself with prisons, scaffolds, soldiery, and guns, any more than they can brush back the sea with petty brooms. They are fooled, amused, kept quiet with something called the franchise; but if the time ever came when the majority-vote really endangered the privileges of the wealthy classes, the revolution would be precipitated. But the “right of suffrage,” in America at least, is a farce from the primaries to the final count. The “State” is made up by a few men before ever a caucus is held; the platform settled, and a political catchword – which passes for principle – conjured up at the last moment, when everything else is done. Then the two parties “go in” to win, and the one which includes the shrewdest schemers, the most seared consciences, and has the biggest barrel, working through “voters” who have only a choice between a job and idleness, comes out ahead. “Men who are economically slaves cannot be politically free,” Albert Parsons said, and it is in all countries and all times *true*.

It is the hope of many sincere State Socialists in this country that by taking up the wrongs and needs of the people one by one, urging them upon city councils, legislatures, and congresses without ceasing, by making political issues of the principal wants of the hour, and keeping up a constant agitation, that gradually and peaceably the government can be changed into a good, safe paternalism, warranted to secure justice to all. “The people” have secured about one little favourable law, to ten powerful edicts that strengthen the classes in their vested rights, in the last twenty years. Where one poor workingman has received a straw’s benefit from a statute-law, a hundred men have secured fat spoils through the “bills” our law-makers are paid to manufacture and pass. A sop is thrown to working-men now and then in the way of a law “looking to their interests,” while “syndicates,” “trusts,” monopolies and corruptions, grow and swallow them all at a stupendous rate. It must look discouraging to one who hopes for relief through political action alone.

No; the “dear people” might vote till doomsday and not change the current of events; but there is another element creeping into the situation. The low ominous mutterings of discontent and desperation, coming with thrilling power through the false quiet, have struck the ears of the higher middle classes; they tremble and look about them, fearful lest the deluge may not wait to come after them. What can be done to stay the awful flood, which may sweep everything before it? What more easy than to grant a few of the measures demanded by many of the foremost agitators?

Place railroads, telegraphs, transportation lines in the hands of the government, pass more laws limiting land-ownership, and forbidding all money except government money. A “dangerous element” in society would be quieted, government be strengthened, the “ins” would be more securely in, the privileges of the “higher” classes would not be materially interfered with – indeed, they might find their interests greatly enhanced by having the means they must use to a great extent in one place, so as to secure them easily – and everything would be so lovely that “all might go on smooth and even” for another fifty years perhaps.

It may become a question in the near future whether it is best to take a few

concessions, get the burdens shifted a little, and stave off a thorough, world-wide, radical revolution, or to ignore offered compromises and agitate for full and complete freedom.

If we do the first, we simply leave for our children the work we should do to-day. We “pile up wrath against a day of wrath.” In the condition in which the world is at the present time, we ought to accomplish the great change in one generation. The commercial system is almost toppling over; the human race, all civilisation, is ready for a new regime. Of course the present system *can* be propped up, the miseries of the poor relieved, or rather, varied, and with a few changes we can drag along a short age more. But is it best? Can true lovers of perfect liberty and justice consistently work for a few concessions, then die and leave the world, with the day of reckoning yet to come? It is a question we should all ponder.

Any relief in the shape of charity is still worse. It seems to me that people who once submit to the receiving of alms, without a blush of shame, are doomed; they are hopelessly apathetic and degraded. The giving of alms

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satisfies the conscience of the rich exploiter, strengthens his position, widens the gulf between the classes, and renders the recipients more subservient and obedient than before. I confess I never had so little hope for the American people as since the recent occurrences among the starving miners of Illinois. The facts are appalling enough to thrill the stoutest heart; for here in this boasted land of the free, a country growing so rich and prosperous that it takes an eloquent orator three hours to expatiate upon it, are thousands of men, women, and children actually starving to death and dying of the diseases want engenders. The men are eager and willing to work, the coal lies in the earth in abundance, and the world's inhabitants need it; yet because some men own "the hole in the ground," poor people must freeze this winter, and the miners must go hungry all the time.

And so these workers must be kept barely alive by the *kind charities* of philanthropic people! When the relief trains came in, those starving men marched behind the "committee" riding in carriages (hired, it is supposed, out of the relief funds), headed by a brass band whose members had not strength enough to blow out the tune they commenced! They had lived on the wind for some time, but had none to spare for their big brass horns. Think of it! Making a parade of their degradation! Able-bodied men holding a celebration over their deep humiliation! Not one indignation meeting had been held; not a resentful word murmured over such a state of affairs! Not with bowed heads and sorrow did they accept the bread they were forced to take or starve, but with a demonstration as if publishing their downfall to the world!

It has long been a fixed idea with many that the American workingman would never suffer starvation quietly; that when trodden upon too sorely he would turn and rend his destroyer; but the day has come, and he licks the hand that first withheld, then doled out in; charity, while he capers and shouts to his master's

honour with all the little remaining strength that he possesses!

More cruel, greedy monsters never existed than the coal corporations in this State. Human life is absolutely nothing to them in their rapacious grasping for wealth. Their victims suffer and die in the midst of their property, and not a stick or stone is touched. The company's stores, filled with all they need, stand undisturbed amidst the starving.

All but a few Anarchists and Socialists have persistently hushed any enquiries into causes. "These people want *bread*, not discussions and resolutions," they say; and so, as the citizens keep their "hands" fed and above the dangerous point, and do not question the justice of the situation, the soulless corporations rest calmly on their privileges and wait their own sweet will to set their drudges to work on a miserable pittance.

Charity is a curse when substituted for justice. It is of no use expending it on those already lost – the wrecks of society must be society's charge. To teach strong independent men to accept it with public rejoicing is to degrade them many degrees below anything they have yet known.

But for the element of new thought awakened in the serious minds of middle-class people, the case would be well-nigh hopeless. So, again I urge greater zeal and earnestness; less care for conventionalities, respectability or personal consequences; more of the feeling of personal responsibility for the injustice and suffering society tolerates. I do not point out your work, or ask you to take up any particular phase of economic action, because I know that with a thorough realising sense of the *vital question* deep in your soul, you must *do good*. Keep awake, and be in earnest!

Maywood, Ill., U.S.A.

## Something in a Name

Lizzie M. Holmes

*The Commonweal*, 28 December 1889

I believe that the working people of England are far in advance of the same class in the United States in comprehension of economic questions and of the social and industrial situation. They are braver, more daring; but this naturally ensues from their better understanding of their own rights and powers. They march, carry red banners, sing revolutionary songs, and "state grievances" in no mild terms. They hold many meetings, and keep numerous speakers in the field. This, at least, we gather from our reading of the *Commonweal* and an occasional London daily.

Why should it be so? Here where the boast is that every man is a sovereign and all are free and equal before the

law? Have we not the "freest and most prosperous people in the world"? You hear it often enough and as soon as you strike the coast line of America. But alas for our boasts! In Chicago on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November every suitable hall was closed against memorial meetings; the exercises in memory of our brave martyrs were held outside the city, and even then the Waldheim Cemetery authorities did all in their power to prevent the meeting by denying a place for speakers or even room for a carriage or wagon from which they could address the throng. In Philadelphia, thousands of people were prevented from gathering in a mass meeting to hear Hugh Pentecost on "The Crime of the 11<sup>th</sup> of November" by the authorities closing the hall already

rented and paid for. In many other cities no attempts at demonstration were made because it was known to be useless. And yet, scarcely a word is said about such legal invasion of personal liberty. It is treated as a matter of course. No one dares be so “lawless and disorderly” as to rebel against such despotism – no one thinks of such a thing as defying a policeman’s command. The chief of police in the United States has more power than England’s queen. His monarchy is unlimited; he is not bound by constitutions, or the will of the people. He is as complete an autocrat as the Czar of Russia – in reality, not in name. He is called here “a servant of the people.” And herein lies the principal difference between the two countries. Everything is misnamed over here, and the people are so misled by fine-sounding titles that they do not know tyranny, robbery, and oppression when they see and feel them. From the president down to a petty constable everything is under a misnomer, and when the people feel inclined to rebel against conditions, they look around and see nothing definite to fight. They only see, apparently, “freedom and equality for all,” a “government by and for the people,” universal suffrage, equal opportunities, no aristocracy, no classes, no monarch. There is no visible despotism to struggle against, though they know that the hardest workers are poor, the most willing often rewarded with starving idleness, and that humanity suffers as much through poverty, famine, and sickness as elsewhere.

In England the common people easily learn that they are saddled with a large family of paupers for whom parliament must make fresh provision every year, called queen, princes, princesses, dukes, etc. The whole system by which they are robbed has become so methodical, so old, so customary, that each person is born into a certain groove, with no illusory hope of getting out of it by his own exertions; he is not told he is a sovereign, not taunted with the assertion that he has equal opportunity with the richest to gain wealth and power. He is given plainly to understand that there are classes, and it is the right of one class to live in idleness and rack rent him. He has something tangible to protest against, and the dullest rebel, or feel ready to do so, at the first opportunity. In America our billionaires, railroad kings, coal-barons, landlords, and bankers, who hold the fate of the common people in the hollow of their hands, comprise an aristocracy as powerful as that in any monarchy; but our legislature votes them *privileges* instead of direct incomes, and our good labouring masses do not recognise them as what they are.

We are supposed to have no classes; yet the working girl or working man stands less chance of meeting his or

her employer on an equal social plane than in England or Germany. Several years ago, the junior partner of a large clothing firm was married and had a grand wedding. His employees clubbed together and bought a handsome solid silver service. The forewoman collected the money, bought the silver, and had it sent direct to the house. Some of the girls who had contributed generously, said regretfully, “I wish we could have seen it at least. I wonder if we could not get a glimpse of it if we peeped in at the windows after dark.” From the little their employer allowed them after his profits were made, the girls deducted more than they could spare to buy a present they could never hope to see – and not a foot among them dare tread where it had gone. Is there a tighter drawn line anywhere?

**“Law and order” is but another name for the tyranny that pins a man to earth and makes him lie there quietly while another robber takes all he has.**

The boasted right of universal suffrage is but the privilege of handling a bit of paper as the boss directs, and has no bearing whatever on the voter’s real wants, needs, or desires. He simply knows he may lose a chance to toil if he does not “use” it.

Our officers are all “servants of the people,” supposed to have no will of their own, but desirous of doing whatever is best for the welfare of society. But woe be to the poor man or the woman driven to despair by poverty, if they come in contact with

one of these “servants”! Servants they are, but the badly-bribed servants of a few greedy capitalists, engaged to do the dirty work of government, rather than the *people’s* servants. If they were known as the king’s own or a czar’s instruments of terror, we would know better how to deal with them.

“Law and order” is but another name for the tyranny that pins a man to earth and makes him lie there quietly while another robber takes all he has. It is more respectable to have the fleecing done in an orderly and peaceful manner; and if we name the process something awe-inspiring – so much the better, for the people know no better.

We have the letter but not the spirit. It is obligatory on citizens to reverence certain names, such as equality, liberty, the franchise, citizenship, law and order, etc. They do not recognise the most palpable wrong if bearing these titles. It would be a step in advance if the United States should resolve itself into a dictatorship, as some men still dream of having done, so that the people would see something tangible to attack.

We must teach the people to *know* oppression when they see it, no matter in what guise it comes. Slavery is slavery, though the chains be ever so gilded. Liberty, true liberty, will be *so* bright, will bring such comfort, such happiness, such plenty in her train, that we cannot by any possibility mistake her.

# Others

## Private Ownership

*The Alarm*, 1 November 1884

*Liberty*, of Boston, has this to say of us: "The second number of THE ALARM has arrived. While like the first it abounds in sayings bright and brave, and keen and true, it spoils all its support of liberty by opposing the private ownership of capital," and it adds, "Pray, what are the other liberties worth without the liberty to *own* tools?" *Liberty* claims to be an anarchistical journal. Anarchy means without law. How can a man *own* something without law? Of course a man can possess any and everything without law; but how can he without law *own* what he possesses? The right to the free use of tools is personal liberty; but *ownership* is the enslavement of all who are denied this right. Pray, what are all other liberties worth without the liberty to *use* tools, the private ownership of which can only be preserved by the enactment of law and the exercise of "authority"?

## The Indians

*The Alarm*, 8 November 1884

### Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs

Hiram Price, commissioner of Indian Affairs, has made his annual report to the secretary of the interior. The commissioner says that more Indians are living in houses and fewer in tee-pees than a year ago; more are cultivating the soil and fewer following the chase, and there are more in the mechanical shops, and several hundred and more Indian children in the schools. In the near future it is fair to presume that the Indian will be able to care for himself, and be no longer a burden on the government.

"With regard to the cost of the Indian service, the commissioner says: The Indians actually get, of the money appropriated to feed and clothe them, only about seven dollars per annum per capita, or a fraction less than two cents a day for each Indian. The appropriation is too small, if it is expected to transform the Indians into peaceable, industrious and self-supporting citizens in any reasonable time. Among the items for which more liberal appropriations should be made is for pay of police, pay of additional farmers, and pay of the officers who compose the courts of Indian offenses. More liberality in paying Indian agents, and assisting such Indians as show a disposition to help themselves, would be true economy."

The commissioner says the needs of the Indians require that the Indian appropriation bill be passed early in the Congress session. The misfortunes of the Piegan, Blackfeet and other Indians, he says, are due to the disappearance of game, and their inability to support

themselves for the present by agriculture. They will have to depend almost wholly on the government for food for several years. These Indians, with proper assistance, will in a few years own teams and have land under cultivation, which, with a few cattle, will be sufficient to make most of them independent.

What a commentary the above report is upon our boasted civilization. What a jargon of meaningless assertions. The Indian has been "civilized" out of existence and exterminated from the continent by the demon of "personal property." Originally a docile race, full of pride, spirit, kindness and honour, they were betrayed, then kidnapped and sold into slavery by the early settlers of

**But "personal ownership" requires masters and slaves, and the Indian through a ceaseless struggle of more than three centuries has always preferred death to the latter.**

the Atlantic coast. Their lands appropriated by "law," the surveyor's chain reaching from ocean to ocean, driven from the soil, disinherited, robbed and murdered by the piracy of capitalism, this once noble but now degraded, debauched and almost extinct race have become the "national wards" of their profit-mongering civilizers. Under the aegis of "mine and thine," barbarism became so cruelly refined that man prospers best and only when he exterminates his fellow man.

Left to themselves, left to the exercise of free will and personal liberty – anarchy – the red man would be alive and prospering, dwelling in peace and fellowship with his Caucasian brothers. But "personal ownership" requires masters and slaves, and the Indian through a ceaseless struggle of more than three centuries has always preferred death to the latter.

# The Steet Car Strike

M.H.

*The Alarm*, 11 July 1885

The street car strike, in connection with the deep interest manifested by the public, presents a fair picture of the workings of private property systems, of the “glorious liberties,” the “free opportunities” we enjoy “under the best government the sun ever shone upon,” and of the blessings of law and order as represented by brutal policemen armed with ready clubs and revolvers.

The people have patiently put up with being crowded, jammed, frozen, roasted, deserted in the hour of direst need, but they remembered these things when the company’s greatest victims dared unite, and, to some extent, defy them. However, here in “free America,” the terrifying club and the prospective stationhouse at the mere mention of a certain little quadruped, almost succeeded in silencing the outraged multitude.

The strikers were not so “unreasonable” as to demand what rightfully belongs to them. They did not ask to own and control the cars they run, the horses they care for, or the roads they build, although all of these are worthless without their labour. They did not even ask a voice in the rules and regulation under which they must work, or a choice in their overseers and managers; they did not so much as ask for more of the comforts of life, more leisure and better opportunities: they asked nothing so absurd as this.

They simply insisted on their right to organise as seemed to them most beneficial; they disputed the company’s right to punish all opposition to their wishes by depriving culprits of an opportunity of obtaining the means of life. This powerful corporation wants *submissive* slaves, and men hate to give up the semblance of liberty, although they have not the real thing. We have also gloried over and flattered ourselves in the possession of this shadow we call “liberty,” that the fight for its retention seems a grand and noble one. But, ah! We will be forced to learn through bitter experience that when the substance of freedom is gone, the possession of its shadow is a matter of mere indulgence on the part of the successful explorers of the world.

If we admit the right of a few men to own absolutely the ground which no man created – the right of way, the cars, the tracks, barns and horses that labour and nature have brought into existence, and that labour alone makes useful, then we must accord them the right to do exactly as they please with them.

If it is right that labour should be, like lumber, wheat or coal, subject to the “law of supply and demand,” it is right for employers to work men sixteen hours a day with the thermometer 28 degrees below or 100 degrees above zero [Fahrenheit], for a pittance, so long as they can get them. No matter if labour suffers, starves and dies, when not purchased; if it is a marketable commodity we must submit to market chances. If we admit one man’s right to say to another when he shall work, how long, and how much he shall get for it, we must not complain if little or nothing is given to him in return for the work he is allowed to do. This is logical. But in what condition does the admission of these principles leave mankind? Simple slavery, nothing less. Deprived of free access to nature’s gift, with machinery,

tools, necessities of life “owned” out of his reach; with his very existence and that of his loved ones dependant upon the will of companies, corporations and bosses, what is freedom but an empty sound – a vague, meaningless shadow.

That the street car men have asked for a slight recognition of a common right, and by resistance have won it, does not make it any less true that wage-workers are not free men.

They won the slight concession they asked for because the public were immediately concerned, and the public is a power. And again *force exists* and that is a strong point. But, as a general thing, the few concessions given to striking working men amount to *nothing*, while property, law and government remain as they are. If the classes who own do not get all the advantages away from the labourer in one way, they will in another, because, as long as they exist, they have the power to do so.

Fighting for concessions with a power one acknowledges has a right to exist must end in a wearisome, unsuccessful struggle in which the propertyless suffer most.

Better strike the power itself out of existence. Demand all your rights at once, leaving no chance of life for systems and laws which have made us slaves so long, and thus forever end tedious, often fruitless strikes, which costs the toiler so much and gains him so little.

**They did not even ask a voice in the rules and regulation under which they must work, or a choice in their overseers and managers; they did not so much as ask for more of the comforts of life, more leisure and better opportunities**

# What Is Socialism?

J.H.

*The Alarm*, 9 January 1886

Socialism is the theory of a social condition in which there will be neither possessors nor proletarians, neither rulers nor those ruled over, but freemen, voluntarily associated workers, men who are free in their equality, and equal in their liberty, as members of one and the same family.

Is the realisation of such social condition possible? This question should be answered by another question. Is the abolition of individual property and its transformation into associated production possible? If that is possible then everything else will follow ultimately.

Let us, a moment dwell upon the above mentioned. Individual property exists, even when the owner is no individual, but a corporation, the State. The essence of individual property consists in the fact that it is the exclusive possession of those non-productive themselves and which are consequently maintained by the workers.

However, according to our conception (means of production), it should be the direct possession of the productive class, and placed to its disposal free, without payments of interest, etc.

Let us accept for a moment that the entire wealth of a district is in the hands of a central management, which we may call state or anything else. Then the worker will have to pay interest, rent, etc., to the state, the same as he has to landlords and rich men today. What would he gain[ed] by such transformation? Nothing. And if the state should take control of all productive branches would the workers gain anything thereby? Perhaps somewhat higher wages, but nothing further. But when the means of production should be handed over to the various productive association[s], or if these, by force of circumstances, should be compelled to apprehend them; if the various productive associations of a district, state, etc., would federate and organise under what at present is known as "public service," i.e., the exchange and distribution of products, public education, sanitary and postal arrangements, etc., would not the workers be free and equal, and a harmonious living a possibility?

What is there strange, abnormal, supernatural or impossible in this conception of new social order? Nothing, if we do not hold the disappearance of privileges as supernatural and impossible. But that privileges, becoming too onerous, will, as a mere matter of necessity, be eradicated.

## Communal Anarchy

Dyer D. Lum

*The Alarm*, 6 March 1886

A distinction has been sought between what has been termed "Mutualistic Anarchy" and communistic

anarchy, but it is one we fail to recognise. Anarchy, or the total cessation of force government, is the fundamental principle upon which all our arguments are based. Communism is a question of administration in the future, and hence must be subordinate to and in accord with the principles of Anarchy and all of its logical deductions. Anarchy proclaims that sovereignty of the individual, the abrogation of all artificial inequalities, and the total cessation of coercion over a minority, even if that minority be a single individual. To secure this end it demands the abolition of the State.

This involves the destruction of the privileges now legalised and which are the cause of our social discord. To abolish the state is at one blow to destroy special

privilege. With the fall of the legal scaffolding property ceases to be a ravenous beast and is converted into a useful domesticated auxiliary to individual effort.

Government exists merely for the protection of special privileges their laws confer upon property.

Anarchy being our fundamental principle, no scheme of social administration we may advocate, must be contrary thereto. In using the word communism, therefore, we in no wise abridge the rights of the individual. But why use the word at all? it may be asked. For this reason: In speaking of the individual we believe Anarchy covers the whole

ground; but in speaking of society in its associative phase, forming into groups for the purposes of

"The workingmen are taking political action and will no doubt make their power felt," says the *Associated Labor Press*. Is it not absurd to speak of the "political power" of an economic slave? Political power resides only in the hands of those who possess wealth. The empty stomachs and bare backs of the wage-slaves is incompatible with liberty, whether political or otherwise. Political liberty without economic freedom is an empty phrase. The capitalistic class alone possess the means of life and consequently the ballot. The voter who is a wage-slave possesses the shadow, but not the substance of liberty.

*The Alarm*, 4 October 1884

production and distribution, we prefer to use this old term, and by associating it with the qualifying word Anarchy, rescue it from the abuse into which it has fallen.

Each writer in *The Alarm* is responsible for his own articles, but in giving them editorial space they become representative of principles inculcated by this paper. We would therefore say that *The Alarm* does not advocate the *institution of any system* whereby individual right can be invaded. We demand the abolition of the legal sanction to property, believing the destruction of exclusive claim to products for speculative purposes will *leave* property communal. We recognise the right of each to own and possess the result of his own labour; he may make a machine if he wish and call it his

“private property” and no one can object, for under communal anarchy his claim would involve no infringement upon others’ rights. But where the claim has no sanction in law it becomes harmless. In attacking private property we are combating the legalisation of privilege. In using the word State we refer to any alleged source of authority and hold the principle to be as operative in the Social Communes of the future as in the political republic of the present. In brief, the only use of force, in any manner whatever, an Anarchist can justify is that used in attaining and defending his natural rights as an individual. Communal Anarchy rejects all assumed “divine rights” to authority of man over man, whether it be asserted by a monarch, priest, or the majority of the people. The destruction of privilege is our sole object.

## What Is Property?

Frédéric Tufferd

*The Alarm*, 24 April 1886

Since 1840 when Proudhon startled the world in his first “Memoir on Property” by the motto: “Property is robbery,” volumes have been written for and against the right of property; but no writer has yet attempted to give to the word property a clear, definite meaning. What would we think of a chemist using the word acid, here to mean an acid, there in oxide, and further on an alkali? And it is the very thing we are all doing with the word property, notwithstanding the fact that a clear definition of that word was given more than 2,000 years ago.

According to the Roman jurists, property is the right of using and abusing of one’s thing (*jus uti et abutendi re sua*), the right in the thing (*jus in re*) while possession is the only right of using (*jus uti*) the right to the thing (*jus ad rem*). Possession is a natural right and property a legal one. The fact of using a thing is the natural right of possession to it, while the right of property has no foundation in nature and is only conferred by statute law.

You hire a seat in a theatre, says Cicero, and use it, you are a possessor; you hire ten seats in a theatre and use only one, you are a landlord. In the first case you use a thing that will return to the public domain for somebody else to use when you will cease to use it; in the second case you abuse a thing you have no use for, either by forbidding them in need of it to use it, or by taking advantage that all the seats are hired to sub-hire yours [for] more than they are worth.

The modern jurists, not willing to call the thing by its real name, define properly the right of free, absolute disposal. But if the words are changed the meaning is the same, for so long as the owner can dispose of the thing at will he has the right of use and abuse, of holding, the thing unused until somebody will submit to his price and conditions.

The tenant is a possessor, he uses the land and buildings but cannot dispose of them; he is responsible for them, must keep them in order and return them in as good a state as they were, or without any other deterioration

than the natural wear and tear. But is his rent a fair one, and is it paid to whom it is due? That is the question.

The farmer who cultivates his own land is a possessor. The law gives him the power of landlord; he may cease to use the land and still dispose of it; but so long as he does not avail himself of that power, he is practically a possessor. He alone is a

landlord who controls a land he does not work himself.

The mechanic who works his own capital is a possessor. The law gives him power of capitalist: he may let his capital or hire laborers to work it for him; but so long as he does not avail himself of this power, he is practically a possessor. He alone is a capitalist who controls a capital he does not work himself.

**But how to discharge  
the employers? If we  
keep in mind the  
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possession, the answer  
is clear and easy**



Let us never lose sight of the distinction between proprietor (landlord and capitalist), and possessor (user of land and capital), if we want to reason correctly.

A proprietor can dispose of his things in five ways:

1. He can hold for his own profit or pleasure things needed for production, as do the lords of England with their private pastures, hunting parks and pleasure grounds; and he will have the right and power to do so, so long as the law will give him the right of free disposal.
2. He can hold his things unused, as so much land is held in America, and as capitalists do when they stop production so as to force down wages through starvation; and to force up prices through scarcity; and he will have the right and power to do so, so long as the law will give him the right of proprietorship.
3. He can let this thing to a tenant for a part of the produce or a money rent, and so squeeze out from the tenant's labour all but what is necessary for a bare subsistence; and he will have the right and power to do so, so long as the right of property will be recognised.
4. He can invest his money in shares or bonds, and draw a share or dividend out of the profit, fleeced from labour; and he will have the right and power to do so, so long as the right of property will last.

5. He can hire laborers to work his things for his own profit, at starvation wages; and he will have the right and power to do so until, the workers will take forcible possession of the Instrument of labour and work it by themselves, and for themselves.

The issue joined now between the employers and the Knights of Labor is: have the employers the right to hire and discharge as they please, and whom they please. The employees say yes, the Knights of Labor say no. If we recognise the right of property, the employers are right; if we deny the right of property and uphold that of possession, the Knights of Labor are right. Do what they may, the Knights of Labor will have to discharge the employers or be discharged by them.

But how to discharge the employers? If we keep in mind the distinction between property and possession, the answer is clear and easy:

Let the users pay no rent, and the landlords are discharged.

Of course many more reforms will still be needed; but we can not do everything at once. Let us begin by the beginning.

But how to obtain such a result?

Not to be a slave, is to dare and do.

– *Victor Hugo.*

## The Knights of Labor

**Dyer D. Lum**

*Liberty, 19 June 1886*

The rapid growth of the organisation of the Knights of Labor is one of the signs of the times. The age is moving on with rapid strides toward a social revolution. As in all pre-revolutionary periods, men are blindly groping and associating together to discover some patent method of compromising light and darkness, authority and liberty, hoping to discover the happy twilight medium in which both can agree. Such is the political platform of the Knights of Labor. Brought into close associative effort by the pressure of economic necessity, their hearts stirred by the unconscious influence of the spirit of the times, blind to the logic of events that is proclaiming still further liberty to the individual, and with their minds thoroughly permeated with the virtues of the quack nostrums of the day, it is no wonder that crude methods should still retain a foothold in their councils.



But Man is ever wiser than men. The unconscious leadership under which they are acting sees more clearly, and will guide more accurately, than the narrow views of nominal and known leaders. The contest of the age is between legalised Capital and compulsory Labour. Capital entrenched in legalised privilege, not only defended by the arm of, but constituting, the State, has fallen heir to the mantle of Caesar. Holding the will o' the wisp of political action in a modern commercially organised State before the straining eyes of the people, it prates loudly of the sacredness of personal liberty. It was in behalf of "liberty" that the proprietor of the Springfield (O.) shops expelled the Knights, and refused them the means of living by their accustomed labour. Secure in their entrenchments of legalised privilege, capitalists dread change, and ring the cry of "liberty" in every key.

The Knights are avowedly banded together to work for the final “abolishment of the wage-system”; and proclaim that “among the higher duties that should be taught in every local assembly are man’s inalienable inheritance and right to a share, for use, of the soil, and that the right to life carries with it the right to the means of living, and that all statutes that obstruct or deny these rights are wrong, unjust, and must give way.” To be sure, they look upon political action as a means to this end, but it is as a *means*, and not as the *end*. With their aim I have the fullest sympathy, and as an Anarchist hold that all statutes “obstruct and deny” this aim.

The question, therefore, arises, shall we stand aloof because of the incorporation among their methods of one which we believe will not accomplish their aim? Are we not in danger of mistaking the means for the end, and, in standing so stiff as to crack our spinal column by bending backward, becoming, in effect, sharpshooters and scouts for the entrenched enemy?

The Knights of Labor are based on the principles of cooperation in industry and arbitration in disputes, and because among their methods I find among their means of action one of the crude notions of the day, shall I withdraw and place a cartridge in my musket to do their enemies’ work? We are passing out of the political into the economic phase of social administration, and as

when we passed from the religious to the political phase, the old weapons are still the handiest to the muscles habituated to their use. The Puritans and Fifth Monarchy men of Cromwell’s day are ridiculous enough in many respects. Men who could rejoice in

such names as “Praise-God-Barebones” tried to fight the battles of political liberty with religious methods, but the unconscious leadership of the spirit of their age made their associative efforts effective toward the end in view. So I, believing myself to be a “real Anarchist,” can be a Knight pledged to work in unison with them in *economic* measures, while smiling at the presence of “survivals” of political means to secure economic ends. As a Knight, too, I am under no obligation to assist in furthering their ends by *political* methods.

In fine, the aims of the Knights of Labor is one thing, the political demands of their

“platform” is another, and is but the temporary excrement of the times.

Therefore, instead of being in the position of subscribing to Calvin’s creed, I rather stand as one who refuses to aid Rome by burning Calvinists at the stake, because, like Rome, I disagree with certain methods they still retain.

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## **We are all Anarchists**

**Lucy E. Parsons**

*The Advance and Labor Leaf*, 12 March 1887

There is no picture so dark but has its bright side – no life so dreary but what at some time a ray of hope flits across its cheerless path. There is no movement so heinous (?) but to those engaged in it has its amusing side. But who can assume for one moment that the awful, horrible, anarchistic movement of “blood-drinking” anarchists can have any amusing side to it? How could such “fiends” ever smile? For after reading insinuations from the pulpit, assertions from the press, and “criticisms” from professional critics, to the average reader an avowed anarchistic society must be composed of beings somewhat resembling the human family, who hold orgies, which they designate as meetings; having been compelled to come in contact with the human race enough (just enough) to learn a few words of their language.

Places selected for holding said meetings (orgies) by these “anarchist fiends” are in keeping with all the rest of their diabolisms, inasmuch as they invariably select only places that are dark, dank and loathsome, where no light is ever permitted to penetrate, either of sunlight or intelligence. And at such appointed times and places these “hysterics of the labour movement” (for these “fiends” have deluded themselves into the belief that they have something in common with the labour movement) write their diabolical mandates upon grimy tables covered with bomb-slaughtered capitalists, these “fiends” having improved upon the capitalist method of starving said victims, and then taking their hides to make fine slippers for their daughters, etc.

And as these “foul conspirators” each in turn reaches a mangy hand under the table and takes therefrom a capitalistic infant’s skull, each slowly raises bloodshot

eyes, fills said skull with sour beer, and clinks the same with some fellow-conspirator's sour beer which is contained in the empty half of a dynamite bomb. At this signal, the whole crowd arise and straighten, as well as they can, their tatterdemalion forms, and with distended nostrils hiss from between clenched teeth, "blood!"

Now, I will ask the readers of *The Advance* and the reading public if the above picture is at all overdrawn when compared with articles from the press, both so-called religious and secular, and also of insinuations from the pulpit for the last few months, regarding that class of people designated anarchist?

The amusing part of this business to the average anarchist is just here – i.e., that we are being used just now as a kind of a bugaboo, a scarecrow to frighten the capitalists into certain concessions to their rebellious slaves, otherwise said slaves might become "anarchist fiends." And this little game is being played for all its worth by certain labour "reformers" and especially by the church. But the capitalists don't frighten a dollar's worth.

In substantiation of a thousand illustrations coming under the observation of anarchists all the time, I need here but note a few, and these from the pulpit. The Rev. Hugh O. Pentecost, of the Congregational church, Newark, N.J., in his sermon entitled the "Henry George Solution of the Labor Problem," as reported in the *New York Standard*, says:

If you say that Henry George is an anarchist, you will simply be exposing your own ignorance. A man who writes two or three books of a purely philosophical character is not an anarchist. A book is not an anarchist's instrument. Before you pronounce judgment on a man you want to hear what that man has to say.

Wonder if the most Rev. D.D. has ever heard of Reclus, Kropotkin, Bakunin, Proudhon, Marx, Fourier and a host of other renowned anarchists who have written books of "a purely philosophical character"? From the same sermon I take this extract:

The Roman Catholic church has made a big mistake in opposing the Knights of Labor. I have studied the Knights of Labor for several years, and I have become convinced that the organisation is one of the great bulwarks that stand between society and red-handed anarchism.

Does this reverend gentleman throw this out as sop to capitalists? Yes, "bulwarks," "red-handed anarchism," etc. Well, it won't work, because the twenty-one demands of the Knights of Labor platform are an endeavour to supplant the present wage system by a system of cooperation and my dear friend, "red-handed anarchism," where and when the wage system has ended. Every attempt of labour organisations to improve the condition of the wage-worker, is – when successful – a limitation of the capitalist's power (authority) and a limitation of the severities of the wage-system.

The capitalist understands full well that his power consists solely of his privilege to dictate the terms and conditions to those who bring to him their commodity-labour-for-sale, and any organisation, it matters not under what name, which attempts in any way to limit or deny this privilege, viz: the power of the possessing class over the non-possessing producing class, is met by the lockout, the blacklist, and when necessary, the policeman's club and the militiaman's bayonet. And this is all justified upon the right of the employer's "conducting his business to suit himself."

Now these are potent facts, which no one having eyes to see can deny, and to assume for one moment that capital and labour (or capitalists and labourers) have an identity of interest, is to assume that the purchaser and seller of a pair of boots have an identity of interest. The one has something to sell, the other to buy. The one's interest is to get all he can, the other's to give just as little as possible. And this commodity – labour – is controlled the same as any other article, viz: by the amount to be found in the market. Hence it is the capitalistic class always in all countries, who strive and manage to keep an army of labourers in compulsory idleness, to be moved around to take the place of any "kickers" in that very "bulwark" which is to stand between them and "red-handed anarchism."

Again the reverend gentleman says:

The Knights of Labor imagine that they are tyrannised over, and once in a while they will do things no one will commend them for. It is this system. A great many think the troubles arise from employers. I know some that are as good as any men who walk the face of the earth. There are some hard-hearted employers, but they are not at the bottom of the trouble. It is on account of the system.

**The amusing part of this business to the average anarchist is just here – i.e., that we are being used just now as a kind of a bugaboo, a scarecrow to frighten the capitalists into certain concessions to their rebellious slaves, otherwise said slaves might become "anarchist fiends."**

Yes, I presume it is only imagination (?) on the part of the K. of L. that they are “tyrannised over.” But it is the “system,” says the reverend gentleman, which is at fault. What more has any anarchist said? Evidently, the reverend gentleman, like many others, is an anarchist and doesn’t know it. But you just touch this beautiful wage system and see under what head capital will place you. And as to those “good employers,” so too there were good chattel slave masters, but what did that have to do with the system of chattel slavery, except to prolong its existence by having the good slave masters held up as shining examples to prove the harmony (?) existing between master and slave, which the horrible abolitionist would sever, just as is the case today with those relations between “good” employers and the wage-slaves, which the “red-handed anarchist” is seeking to destroy. But the anarchists simply answer with the Rev. D.D., “it is the system which is at fault.”

Well, if it is the system that is at the bottom of the trouble, then it certainly should follow to the average thinking person that the system must be changed. But

this reverend gentleman durst not propose such a remedy to his congregation, else he might be set down as a “disturber of the peace,” just as though anything in the line of justice can be brought about unless the “peace” of established injustice is disturbed!

I will state briefly for the information of those who are so busily engaged just now in declaiming against the system and declaring they are not anarchists in the same breath, that our position is about this, to-wit: The wage-system having outgrown its usefulness, inasmuch as it creates famine in the midst of abundance, and makes slaves of nine-tenths of the human family, that it (the system) must go!

And having read history I can’t find any instance where the ruling classes have relinquished any “vested right” without compulsion. And knowing that private property in the means of existence is a “vested right” as much as any ever was or can be, it being upheld by the constitutions of all governments, backed by their powerful armies, we don’t believe the privileged class are going peaceably to surrender these “vested rights.”

## The Proudhon Library

*The Alarm*, 10 March 1888

“System of Economical Contradictions; or, The Philosophy of Misery” By P.J. Proudhon, Vol. 1, 469 pages octavo. Price in cloth, \$3.50; in full calf, blue, gilt edges \$6.50. Published and sold by Benj. R. Tucker, box 366, Boston, Mass.

I know of no literary enterprise of the incalculable importance of that undertaken by Mr. Tucker in presenting to the public a translation of Proudhon’s works. This constitutes the fourth volume of Proudhon’s complete works, and is uniform in style with first volume, “What Is Property?” The second and third volumes of the complete works have not yet been published in English. In the present work the reader will find a most exhaustive and philosophic discussion of economics unequalled in my reading. The subtle vein of sarcasm which often crops out in plain relief requires careful attention upon the part of the reader, but the keen analysis displayed is well worth the most careful thought. In the present volume, after an elaborate discussion of value, we enter upon a study of the following periods of economic evolution: The division of labour, machinery, competition, monopoly, and police or taxation. The volume concludes with a chapter entitled “Of the Responsibilities of Man and of God, Under the Law of Contradiction, or a Solution of the Law of Providence,” a rich treat to the philosophic mind.

The criticism of economic doctrinaires, the keenness with which he dissects socialistic schemes, and the ability manifested in leading the reader into a state of confusion and doubt, and then presenting the only logical outlet from the dilemma, renders this of more than passing interest. It is a work for all time. The typographical execution is excellent, and every earnest student should peruse and possess it.

The next volume to appear will be the fifth of the complete works – that is, the second and final volume of the “Economical Contradictions.”<sup>1</sup>

The complete works will comprise about fifty volumes, which are being published in quarterly parts of sixty-four pages each, as a periodical under the name of the Proudhon Library. A prospectus giving full details of the enterprise may be had by applying to Benj. R. Tucker, box 3366, Boston, Mass. As these are subscription books, no discount on them is given to the book trade, but subscribers to the Proudhon Library get them at a saving of about 30 percent.

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<sup>1</sup> The promised translation of Volume 2 of Proudhon’s *System of Economic Contradictions* never appeared, although extracts of it along with volume 1 can be found in *Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology* (AK Press, 2009). Best known these days from Marx’s *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), which is unfortunate as Marx repeated

distorted Proudhon’s ideas and was not above inventing quotes to do so. See Iain McKay’s “Proudhon’s Constituted Value and the Myth of Labour Notes,” *Anarchist Studies* 25: 1 (Summer 2017) and *The Poverty of (Marx’s) Philosophy*, *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 70 (Summer 2017). (*Black Flag*)

# Marie Goldsmith:

## Scientific Luminary, Anarchist Militant

Søren Hough<sup>1</sup>

Marie Isidorovna Goldsmith experienced the long, unyielding arm of the Russian State as a child. She watched as her parents, dedicated socialist revolutionaries in the Narodnik movement, were unjustly exiled and shuttled from town to town as political prisoners. Isidor, Goldsmith's father, wrote in vivid terms years later about life in exile with his wife and daughter: "Two or three times a week exiles are obliged to present themselves at the police office to write their signatures in a special book. Besides this, in order to prevent escapes, the police daily come to their houses. The chief of the district has the right to imprison an exile without assigning any reason for so doing."<sup>2</sup> While we do not have any firsthand account of what the eight-year-old Goldsmith thought of the experience, these formative years watching her stoic and ideologically committed parents suffer at the hands of a vast, largely irrational, and intrinsically violent system called the State likely influenced her later turn to anarchism.

Goldsmith was born in Saint Petersburg on July 7, 1871.<sup>3</sup> She was presented with role models of educational excellence at an early age. Isidor was a



Marie Goldsmith (1871-1933)

qualified lawyer who had studied at Saint Petersburg University and who put his intellectual curiosity and university training to use in the world of publishing and law, frequently arguing on behalf of the disadvantaged.<sup>4</sup> Her mother, Sophie, was even more impressive in this regard: she spent the first few years of Goldsmith's life at university to become a physician before earning her PhD in botany at the University of Zurich on August 2, 1876, in absentia.<sup>5</sup> It is perhaps not a surprise that Goldsmith herself would eventually earn her Licentiate and Doctorate in biology from the Faculté des sciences

de Paris a few decades later.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout Sophie's educational pursuits and Isidor's work in the press, the two spent much of their time networking and propagandising on behalf of their radical beliefs. For Isidor, this took the form of two publications: *Znanie* (*Knowledge*, 1870–1877) and *Slovo* (*Word*, 1878). These Positivist organs were strictly dedicated to materialist, scientific, and socialist ideas and published interviews with influential thinkers like Karl Marx and Peter Lavrov.<sup>7</sup> Many of these articles were in direct conflict with the views of the

<sup>1</sup> Photograph of Marie Goldsmith part of the James Guillaume Collection courtesy of the Neuchâtel State Archives (AEN), Switzerland. It accompanied a letter dated 18 October 1916, which included the handwritten note: "To our friend James Guillaume. Fond remembrance."

<sup>2</sup> Goldsmith, "Why I Left Russia," 897.

<sup>3</sup> Numerous secondary sources give different years and locations for Goldsmith's birthplace and date. One rumor even suggests she was born in a prison in Pinega, Arkhangelsk, which is contradicted by Isidor's own account of their exile. However, our investigation of numerous primary sources – including educational degrees, naturalization documents, and death announcements – confirm that Marie Goldsmith was born in 1871 in Saint Petersburg (GARF ф.Р5969 оп.1 д.1; "Naturalization decree"; "Death Certificate").

<sup>4</sup> "Goldsmith, Isidor Albertovich," 290–291.

<sup>5</sup> University of Zurich, "Annual Reports," 17.

<sup>6</sup> A Licentiate is analogous to a Bachelor's degree; (GARF ф.Р5969 оп.1 д.1).

<sup>7</sup> Goldsmith, "Why I Left Russia," 886.

strictly Orthodox Christian regime of the Tsars. The papers were accused of spreading the ideas of thinkers like Darwin, whose “theory had not been satisfactorily proved” but which Goldsmith and his colleagues saw as crucial to the study of not just biology, but of social sciences more broadly.<sup>1</sup>

As a result, both *Znanie* and *Slovo* faced repeated censure from government officials. Isidor often found himself having to appeal these decisions through convoluted arguments that framed this or that scientific idea as complementary — rather than contradictory — to the views of the Russian Orthodox establishment.<sup>2</sup> Yet despite implementing his lawyerly skills in defence of his contributors, both publications were frequently forced to cease production and were eventually shuttered for good.

Sophie was no less committed to revolutionary activity. Her and Isidor’s mutual acquaintance, the Russian novelist Ieronim Ieronimovich Yasinsky, even went so far as to describe Sophie as “the ideal of unselfish revolutionary enthusiasm.”<sup>3</sup> She attended the University of Zurich alongside numerous fellow radicals, including Olga Spiridonovna Lubatovich and Maria Dmitrievna Subbotina.<sup>4</sup> In this cradle of socialist thought, Sophie was drawn to Peter Lavrov, one of the populist founders of the Narodnik movement with whom Isidor was in contact for written collaboration.<sup>5</sup> Sophie was so ensconced in the world of radical activism that she had the privilege of sitting in on potentially the only meeting Lavrov ever had with the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, two heavyweight revolutionary intellectuals.<sup>6</sup>

In later years, Marie Goldsmith would carry on these connections. For example, Goldsmith’s prolific work as a translator included publishing Lavrov’s *Lettres Historiques* in French in 1903. In 1916, she was bequeathed some of Bakunin’s key unpublished manuscripts by her friend James Guillaume when he died.<sup>7</sup> She also remained close to Bakunin’s nephew, Aleksey Ilyich Bakunin.

Indeed, it was Emilia Nikolaevna Bakunina (née Lopatina), Aleksey’s wife, who acted as nurse to Marie and her mother in the final moments of their lives.<sup>8</sup>

Sophie and Isidor fled the Tsarist regime in June 1884 with Marie in tow, landing variously in Finland, Switzerland, and other countries before finally settling in Paris, France.<sup>9</sup> This city, with little interruption, became Marie’s home for the remainder of her life. Not long after the Goldsmiths arrived in France, her father was arrested for fraud, served out his sentence in Mazas Prison, and ultimately passed away.<sup>10</sup> The exact cause and year of his death remains unclear, but Isidor did face a series of chronic health issues including chest pains and rheumatism.<sup>11</sup> Sophie faced even greater medical hurdles. We do not know what illness or condition she suffered from specifically, barring what she describes in early letters as neuralgia, eye pain, and stomach troubles.<sup>12</sup> Whatever her condition, she was unable to provide for Marie once Isidor was gone.

While the Goldsmiths had come from some means in Russia, particularly Sophie who was born to the wealthy Androsov family, abroad they lived in harsh poverty. The situation only compounded following Isidor’s death and Sophie’s illness which kept her from work. It was therefore early in Marie’s life when she joked that she had to become “a man” in order “to support her mother financially and spiritually.”<sup>13</sup> Thus began the caring dynamic that inverted their mother-daughter relationship and held fast through to the end of their lives.

Goldsmith went on to study biology at the Sorbonne, following in the footsteps of her highly educated mother, graduating with a Licentiate in 1894.<sup>14</sup> She soon found herself in the supportive presence of the noted evolutionary biologist Yves Delage, himself a medical doctor with a PhD whose work was deeply influential on Goldsmith. She quickly became Delage’s star pupil, a mentee he would not only teach but collaborate with

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, 883, 888.

<sup>2</sup> Goldsmith, “Why I Left Russia,” 886.

<sup>3</sup> Yasinsky, “Novel of My Life,” 363–367.

<sup>4</sup> Ovechkina, “Women’s Political Exile,” 38.

<sup>5</sup> The Narodniks were an early socialist movement in Russia led by the intelligentsia. Ideological leaders of the Narodnik movement, each with their own strategies and theories of revolution, included Peter Lavrov, Nikolay Chernyshevsky, and Mikhail Bakunin. In general, Narodniks believed in spreading propaganda among the peasant classes (Pipes, “Narodnichestvo”).

<sup>6</sup> Guillaume, “*The International*,” 80–81.

<sup>7</sup> Buttier, “James Guillaume and Marie Goldsmith.”

<sup>8</sup> Maximoff, “Maria Isidorovna Goldsmith.”

<sup>9</sup> Goldsmith, “Why I Left Russia,” 903; “Goldsmith, Isidor Albertovich,” 290–291.

<sup>10</sup> “Goldsmith, Isidor Albertovich,” 290–291; GARF ф.Р5969 оп.1 д.163.

<sup>11</sup> GARF ф.Р5969 оп.1 д.152.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Maximoff, “Maria Isidorovna Goldsmith.”

<sup>14</sup> GARF ф.Р5969 оп.1 д.1.

throughout the remainder of his career. Delage and Goldsmith would write three scientific books together to international acclaim, as well as numerous articles in their domain of evolutionary biology.<sup>1</sup> The first of these books, *The Theories of Evolution* (1909), was published before Goldsmith had even finished her doctoral studies on the psychological reactions of fish in 1915. Goldsmith was moreover appointed Editorial Secretary of the zoological section of Delage's academic journal, *L'année biologique*, a prized position that gave Goldsmith even more influence and scientific prestige.

Goldsmith's scientific reputation was far-reaching. She published her research regularly and, according to a flattering profile in the mainstream paper *Paris-soir*, was a "scientist to whom all the foreign countries have offered to come and give lectures."<sup>2</sup> The article goes on to describe Goldsmith's mind as "limpid" because "nothing but scientific or filial thoughts pass through it."<sup>3</sup> She maintained ongoing communication with scientists in France, Russia, and elsewhere, including Nobel Prize-winner Charles Richet; evolutionary psychologist Nadezhda Ladygina-Kohts; the psychologist Wagner Vladimir Aleksandrovich; Swiss naturalists Arnold Pictet and Arnold Lang; and the sociologist Maksim Kovalevsky. Goldsmith even acted as a scientific consultant for the memoirs of Georges Clemenceau, two-time Prime Minister of France. As the Russian anarchist Grigory Maximoff puts it, Clemenceau "turned to no one else but her for advice and explanations on biology."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Goldsmith and Delage collaborated on *Les Théories de l'Évolution* (1909), *La parthénogénèse naturelle et expérimentale* (1913), and *Le mendélisme et le mécanisme cytologique de l'hérédité* (1919). Of note, Kropotkin (privately) and Maximoff (publicly) acknowledged that *Théories* was primarily Goldsmith's work.

<sup>2</sup> "Biologist with a Big Heart."

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Maximoff, "Maria Isidorovna Goldsmith."

Goldsmith's position as Delage's protege did not earn her many friends in her department. Other students were jealous of her mentor's perceived favoritism. Goldsmith's friends Marc Pierrot and Maximoff, as well as the historian Jean Maitron, suggest that after Delage's death in October 1920, her peers seized upon both Goldsmith's status as an unnaturalised Russian emigrée and her demure, humble-to-a-fault manner to undercut her otherwise extremely promising academic career.<sup>5</sup> For her part, Goldsmith did not receive French naturalisation until 1924, almost a decade after receiving her doctorate.<sup>6</sup> This made it difficult to

find steady work, particularly once Delage had passed away, although she kept up her research and teaching positions at institutions such as the École Pratique des Hautes-Études and the Laboratoire de Psychologie de la Sorbonne.<sup>7</sup>

There were other reasons for her career difficulties. Chief among these was her all-encompassing caring relationship with her mother. In a moving obituary, Maximoff notes that Goldsmith was offered multiple "lucrative" positions at universities and other academic institutions around

the world, including the Carnegie Institution or Rockefeller Institute in the United States, based on her well-known, robust scientific output.<sup>8</sup> However, she turned down these offers in favor of remaining close to her mother.<sup>9</sup> The furthest she seems to have been willing to go was the Station biologique de Roscoff, a marine biological research institute on the northern coast of Brittany in France. Roscoff was founded by Delage and was where she conducted much of her research on fish and other aquatic animals.

<sup>5</sup> Pierrot, "Marie Goldsmith"; Maximoff, "Maria Isidorovna Goldsmith"; Maitron, "Étudiants Socialistes Révolutionnaires Internationalistes."

<sup>6</sup> "Naturalization decree."

<sup>7</sup> Piéron, "Personalalia," 882; Piéron, "Nécrologie," 907.

<sup>8</sup> Maximoff, "Maria Isidorovna Goldsmith."

<sup>9</sup> Maximoff, "Maria Isidorovna Goldsmith"; "Biologist with a Big Heart."

**As she worked her way through the ranks of the academic world, she never let go of her deep suspicion, even hatred, of the State, and her overflowing love for liberty and justice**

But there was another side to Goldsmith. As she worked her way through the ranks of the academic world, she never let go of her deep suspicion, even hatred, of the oppression of the State, and her overflowing love for liberty and justice. These were the ideas which brought her to anarchism sometime in the 1890s. It is not clear when Goldsmith decided to embrace anarchism or precisely how it happened. According to one obituary published in the New York paper *Freedom*, she attended a lecture series by the anarchist Saul Yanovksy.<sup>1</sup> In other accounts it was meeting anarchist communist theorist Peter Kropotkin at a conference in 1896 which piqued her interest in libertarian socialism.<sup>2</sup> Just as well, however, the ideological push may have come from within her family; after all, Mikhail Bakunin himself was directly influential on the Narodnik movement, and the Goldsmiths had myriad lifelong connections to the Bakunin family.

Whatever the origin of her ideological turn was, Goldsmith became a full-throated proponent of anarchism. She jumped headfirst into discussions about both theory and practice. In 1891, Goldsmith had joined a small socialist student group called the Étudiants Socialistes Révolutionnaires Internationalistes (ESRI) which was made up of radicals of various strongly-held beliefs and socialist tendencies. By 1897, she and her peer Léon Rémy had pivoted the group to take on an exclusively anarchist position on electoralism and other key issues.<sup>3</sup> The ESRI published multiple pamphlets over the following few years on issues as varied as the position of women in anarchist communism and the utility – or lack thereof – of Zionism as an antidote to antisemitism. Fellow ESRI member Pierrot recalls that Goldsmith was particularly influential in directing the writing of these later pamphlets.<sup>4</sup> These pamphlets, signed communally “ESRI” so as not to give any particular author credit, also offer some of our only insights into what Goldsmith may have thought about topics like feminism and

Zionism. In later years, Goldsmith would steer clear of these ideas almost entirely for reasons that remain obscure in the historical record, preferring to focus instead on economic issues, the organisation of the anarchist community, and the self-liberation of workers.

Although the ESRI dissolved in 1900, Goldsmith remained an ardent propagandist for anarchist ideals. She soon began to write for anarchist periodicals in France and around the world. Perhaps the most notable of these outlets was *Les Temps Nouveaux (LTN)*, a paper started by the French anarchist Jean Grave.<sup>5</sup> *LTN* was one of the leading anarchist papers of its time, successor to the legendary publications *Le Révolté* and *La Révolte* first published at the dawn of anarchism in the Swiss Jura mountains. Goldsmith published prolifically in the journal, writing in elegant French about contemporary labour movements, anarchist theory, and heated debates among her fellow socialists. She

eventually joined the editorial board of *LTN* and its successor, *Plus Loin*. Goldsmith also wrote for the long-running New York-based Yiddish anarchist periodical, *Fraye Arbeter Shtime (FAS)*, under the editorship of Yanovsky, as well as for the Chicago-based Russian anarchist paper, *Dielo Trouda*. To list all of her affiliate publications here would be impossible, but suffice it to say her work was read across innumerable languages and borders, often republished between publications to ensure her words were read in all corners.

Out of the public eye, Goldsmith maintained extensive correspondence with some of the most well-known anarchists of her time. To take one example, she was in written communication with her personal acquaintance Emma Goldman for at least three decades. Other noted correspondents included French anarchists James Guillaume and Émile Pouget; the Russian anarchist Alexander Ge; and the Dutch anarcho-syndicalist Christiaan Cornelissen. Most famously, Goldsmith was Kropotkin’s most prolific correspondent, barring

**Kropotkin thought so highly of Goldsmith that he entrusted her with the completion and translation of the second volume of *Mutual Aid* in the event of his death**

<sup>1</sup> G-R. “Maria Goldshmid.”

<sup>2</sup> Pierrot, “Marie Goldsmith.”

<sup>3</sup> Maitron, “Etudiants Socialistes Révolutionnaires Internationalistes”; Pierrot, “Marie Goldsmith.”

<sup>4</sup> Pierrot, “Marie Goldsmith.”

<sup>5</sup> *LTN* would eventually be succeeded by *Plus Loin*.



his own brother, with over 350 letters exchanged between 1897 and 1917.<sup>1</sup> Their bond was deep and spanned political, scientific, and even personal interests. Kropotkin thought so highly of Goldsmith that he entrusted her with the completion and translation of the second volume of *Mutual Aid* in the event of his death: “If I can’t finish the last pages myself, you write them in French, and Sanya Schapiro and Sasha will translate them into English. You know the subject better than I do, you will get into my train of thought and you will be able to do it.”<sup>2</sup> While Kropotkin did ultimately complete that work, he died before publishing his follow-up to his other major effort, *Ethics*. He left Goldsmith with the task of translating what he had written and with writing a preface.<sup>3</sup> According to Maximoff, “She was the only one he considered capable of this work, both in scientific training and in spirit.”<sup>4</sup>

Goldsmith’s home in Paris, which she shared with her mother even in adulthood, became a hotspot for anarchist activity. Both Marie and Sophie held court as their peers discussed radical ideas; their home at 2 rue Marie Rose became a hub of Russian anarchist emigré activity in Paris.<sup>5</sup> Sophie’s willing engagement in both these discussions and in written correspondences with the likes of the Kropotkins imply that she, too, had been won over to the anarchist cause (or, indeed, she was won over first and brought Marie along with her). Together, the two radical scientists, mother and daughter, ensured a strong anarchist influence in the immigrant socialist milieu in Paris.

Alongside the Russian emigré community, Goldsmith also maintained a persistent relationship with Jewish anarchists both in France and abroad. Goldsmith’s Jewish heritage is often misreported; her father, Isidor, was born to a prominent secular Jewish family. However, he and his siblings were all baptised and converted to Lutheranism at a young age.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, it is highly unlikely that Sophie, coming from the well-known and landed

Russian Androsov family, had any Jewish connection. Therefore, according to traditional matrilineal descent laws in Judaism, Goldsmith was not Jewish.

However, this is not to suggest that Goldsmith (or her father) neglected their Jewish heritage.<sup>7</sup> In fact, we have clues that she may have felt a connection to the Jewish diaspora. One telling obituary in the New York-based *Freedom* alludes to this: “Due to certain circumstances, Maria took an interest in the Jewish anarchist movement in France and although she never studied Jewish as a language, she seldom missed an important meeting, gathering or affair arranged by the Jewish anarchists in Paris.”<sup>8</sup> Another, published in *FAS* by Abraham Frumkin, points out that “it is interesting that the very first expression of her anarchist reasoning, just like the beginning of her activism for anarchism, occurred in connection with the Jewish anarchist movement.”<sup>9</sup> A letter from Goldsmith herself states that she went out of her way to attend a Jewish anarchist meeting in Whitechapel during a congress in London.<sup>10</sup>

Then there is Goldsmith’s decades-long record of publishing in the Yiddish press. Goldsmith herself never learned Yiddish (her father’s family spoke German at home). Nevertheless, she wrote for a variety of notable journals: predominantly *FAS*, as mentioned, but also *Fraye Gezelshaft*, *Der Arbeter Fraynd*, *Frayhayt*, and, briefly, *Forverts*.<sup>11</sup> Goldsmith’s choice of these particular papers, written in a language she could not understand without assistance, suggests she had a particular interest in the Jewish community. Reflecting this point, after Goldsmith’s death, the prominent Jewish anarchist poet Sholem Schwarzbard wrote a touching obituary for Goldsmith in the pages of *FAS* which is interleaved with suggestive religious Hebrew and Yiddish terminology.<sup>12</sup> For now, however, the evidence that indicates Goldsmith retained a Jewish identity remains circumstantial.

<sup>1</sup> Bakounine, “Unpublished Letters,” 419.

<sup>2</sup> Confino & Rubinstein, “Kropotkin the Scholar,” 284.

<sup>3</sup> Lyubina, “Russian Women,” 444.

<sup>4</sup> Maximoff, “Maria Isidorovna Goldsmith.”

<sup>5</sup> It so happens that Vladimir Lenin lived at 4 rue Marie Rose from 1909–1911. It is unclear whether Sophie or Marie were acquainted with Lenin, but one can imagine that they would have crossed paths. This seems almost certain given that Lenin’s lover, Inès Armand, also lived at 2 rue Marie Rose; (GARF ф.Р5969 оп.1 д.1, “Death Certificate”).

<sup>6</sup> Isidor himself was baptized at 9 years old on June 20, 1852 (“Duplicates of Lutheran Metric Books”).

<sup>7</sup> According to my correspondences with a descendant of the Goldsmith family, even after conversion to Lutheranism, Isidor and his siblings “all certainly never forgot their Jewish ancestry.”

<sup>8</sup> Note that the term “Jewish” in this case refers to Yiddish; G-R. “Maria Goldshmid.”

<sup>9</sup> F., “Comrade M. Korn Dead.”

<sup>10</sup> GARF ф.Р5969 оп.1 д.152.

<sup>11</sup> Rublyov, “Our newspaper,” 115; Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits*, 214.

<sup>12</sup> Schwarzbard, “Maria Siderovna Goldshmid.”

While Goldsmith seems to have tried in some sense to keep her research career and political activism separate, most obviously through the use of pseudonyms when writing for the anarchist press, her science was not wholly devoid of her political convictions. Goldsmith, like her mentor Yves Delage and comrade Peter Kropotkin, was a staunch Darwinist and Lamarckian. For Goldsmith, science showed so evidently what she knew to be true morally: that the path toward evolutionary survival came through cooperation, just as Darwin articulated extensively in *The Descent of Man* (1871). For Goldsmith, like Kropotkin, science was not only compatible with anarchism but a map toward its realisation. The scholar G.I. Lyubina cites Goldsmith making this point directly, stating that “Biology, in its essence, is perhaps the most liberating science for the human mind” and that it illustrates “the struggle between the forces of darkness and the forces of light.”<sup>1</sup>

Goldsmith was even so brazen as to blend the scientific and political out in the open. Her first book printed with Delage, *The Theories of Evolution*, was published ostensibly as a purely scientific text, yet it begins with overt commentary rebutting religious notions around the emergence of life on Earth.<sup>2</sup> Emphasising its political character, this introduction was republished in the anarchist *LTN* in August 1911 under their real names.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps even more boldly, the authors give a prime spot at the conclusion of the volume to an extensive discussion of Kropotkin’s ideas about mutual aid.<sup>4</sup> Then there is its translation: when *Theories* was set for an English edition, they chose to work with André Tridon, a militant socialist, psychiatrist, and IWW member. Despite its unorthodox nature, the book was well-received internationally; *The New York Times* referred to *Theories* as a

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comprehensive – if “terse” – discussion of competing ideas in evolutionary biology.<sup>5</sup>

But perhaps most strikingly, Goldsmith and Delage co-authored a two-part article in an overtly anarchist magazine published in Portugal called *A Sementeira*.<sup>6</sup> The article, titled “Darwinism,” is light on anarchist ideas, but nevertheless stands out for being printed under their full names in a non-scientific political outlet. The piece again emphasises the importance of cooperation in evolutionary thought, attempting to synthesise

Lamarck and Darwin and rebutting the later inventions of “vulgarisers” like Herbert Spencer (“survival of the fittest”) and Thomas Henry Huxley (“the struggle for existence”).<sup>7</sup> These later theorists, Goldsmith and Delage argue, badly twist Darwin’s words to support a hierarchical and viciously competitive societal structure that rejects “social solidarity” with “the sick, the infirm, the old.”<sup>8</sup> By way of counterexample, the authors cite Darwin in *The Descent of Man* when he refers to “the social instincts lead an animal to take pleasure in the society of its fellows, to feel a certain amount of sympathy with them, and to perform various services for them.”<sup>9</sup>

Goldsmith’s anarchism had a clear orientation throughout her life. On one hand, she was a staunch believer in the methods of revolutionary syndicalism, which she argued was intrinsically and necessarily anarchistic in orientation. As she states in her 1920 political tract, *Revolutionary Syndicalism and Anarchism: Struggle with Capital and Power*, “The only difference is that anarchism also includes a number of philosophical, ethical, historical, and other views, whereas syndicalism is a purely practical movement. But only one theory is compatible with these practical views, and that is

<sup>1</sup> Lyubina, “Russian Women,” 437.

<sup>2</sup> Delage & Goldsmith, “Theories of Evolution,” 5–11.

<sup>3</sup> Delage & Goldsmith, “Evolution.”

<sup>4</sup> Delage & Goldsmith, “Theories of Evolution,” 347–351.

<sup>5</sup> “Evolution Theories.”

<sup>6</sup> Delage & Goldsmith, “Darwinism”; Delage & Goldsmith, “Darwinism (Conclusion).”

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

the anarchist theory.”<sup>1</sup> Her commitment to syndicalist concepts like the general strike remained central to her praxis.

On the other hand, Goldsmith firmly believed in communism as the natural conclusion of anarchist thought. In her famous essay “On Organisation,” read at the London Congress of Communist Anarchists in 1906, she states, “...the free, highly developed person cannot put up with social oppression, cannot live in a slave society. If they are satisfied that they, personally, are superior to those around them, this development is one-sided: the best human feelings – justice, sympathy, solidarity – are undeveloped in that person. This is why the desire for the full development of the human person leads us to recognise the fullest form of social solidarity. We are communists not in spite of the fact that we are anarchists, but precisely because of this.”<sup>2</sup> She would elaborate on these economic ideas in later essays as she explored notions of expropriation and worker ownership.

Goldsmith was also unafraid to push back against her fellow anarchists — even those she considered friends. Most famously, she supported the signatories of the Manifesto of the Sixteen, the infamous declaration of anarchist support for the Entente in World War I. This immediately put her in a minority camp at odds with everyone from Errico Malatesta to Rudolf Rocker. Although she never signed the Manifesto herself, she was excoriated in print alongside Kropotkin and other “defencists” by figures like Ge. Ge, who served as an editor alongside Goldsmith at *Rabochiy Mir*, devoted an entire chapter of his 1917 book *The Way to Victory* to his critique. In it, he called Goldsmith “Joan of Arc of the Third Republic” and accused her of being so in love with the French Republic that she had confused the idea of “equality before the law” for anarchism.<sup>3</sup> Despite these attacks, Goldsmith defended her and

**Her commitment to syndicalist concepts like the general strike remained central to her praxis**

Kropotkin’s position on the war as ideologically consistent for years afterward.<sup>4</sup>

To take another example, Goldsmith counted among her close associates the Ukrainian anarchist Nestor Makhno, famous for leading the Black Army to hold the Free Territory of Ukraine following the Russian revolution.<sup>5</sup> Goldsmith even helped Makhno with the translation of the second and third volumes of his memoirs.<sup>6</sup> Yet in 1926, when Makhno and Peter Arshinov released *The Platform* – their new formulation of anarchist organisation – Goldsmith was quick to respond.

Goldsmith followed up the release of *The Platform* with a scathing letter alleging that Arshinov and his peers supported the tyranny of the majority.<sup>7</sup> This forced the Platformists to defend their ideas in an additional article directly addressing her critiques.<sup>8</sup> This did not settle the matter, however, and Goldsmith would go on to criticise the Platform (and its counterpart, synthesism) in the pages of *Plus Loin* for years to come, forcing Arshinov to repeatedly defend his views.<sup>9</sup> The conflict reached its height when Arshinov finally abandoned anarchism wholesale in 1931. He wrote in his farewell essay “Anarchism and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” that Marie Goldsmith was one of the “anarchist theorists” (including Errico Malatesta and others) who had spuriously dismissed *The Platform* on a “democratic-decadent” basis.<sup>10</sup> Makhno, it should be noted, never abandoned anarchism or *The Platform* and does not seem to have taken the ordeal personally.

The intense connection between Marie and her mother was never clearer than in their last moments together in January 1933. When her mother finally passed away of illness and old age, Marie was quick to follow: she took poison and died at Hôpital Cochin, a hospital for the poor, two days later on January 11 at 61 years of age.<sup>11</sup> She only

<sup>1</sup> Korn, *Revolutionary Syndicalism*. Forthcoming English translation from the Marie Goldsmith Project.

<sup>2</sup> Korn, “On Organization.”

<sup>3</sup> Ge, *The Way to Victory*, 49–56.

<sup>4</sup> Korn, “His Attitude Toward the War”; Isidine, “About the Manifesto.”

<sup>5</sup> The anarchist Ida Mett discusses in her book *Memories of Nestor Makhno* that she implored Makhno to ask one of her “friends,” like Goldsmith, to help him concentrate and refine his memoirs (Mett, “Memories,” 17).

<sup>6</sup> Skirda, “Anarchy’s Cossack.”

<sup>7</sup> Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad, “Questions and Answers.”

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Isidine, “Organization and Party”; Isidine, “Organization and Party (Continued)”; Arshinov, “A Reply to Maria Isidine.”

<sup>10</sup> Arshinov, “Anarchism and the Dictatorship.”

<sup>11</sup> Cochin was the very same “Hospital X” where George Orwell stayed in in 1929 and later described in his 1946

left a short note behind: “I am going after her. Please bury us together. We have two places next to my father in Ivry Cemetery. I hand over and leave everything to A. Schapiro and E. Bakunina. Please feed the birds and put them in good hands.”<sup>1</sup>

Many obituaries about the Goldsmiths were published around the world in the months that followed, from scientific journals to the anarchist press. Makhno himself beautifully eulogised Marie, likening her to Kropotkin, Élisée Reclus, and Varlaam Cherkezov as one of the “titans of anarchism.”<sup>2</sup> Anarchist luminaries like Goldman, Berkman, and Mollie Steimer expressed profound grief at her passing in private letters.<sup>3</sup> Expressions of mourning were immediately followed by repeated calls to raise funds to publish Goldsmith’s collected works. Berkman and Maximoff asked their international comrades to organise and donate toward this cause.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, their efforts seem to have gone in vain.

Goldsmith’s legacy has been both celebrated and forcibly silenced since her passing. In the scientific realm, Goldsmith’s work, in particular her 1914 thesis, is still cited in twenty-first century studies on animal perception. Meanwhile, an arrest report on the anarchist Francesco Ghezzi dated September 15, 1938, details how the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) directed the burning of thirty-two of his books. Among them were anarchist mainstays Max Stirner’s *The Ego and Its Own*, Mikhail Bakunin’s *The State and Anarchism*, Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid: a Factor of Evolution*, and Marie Goldsmith’s *Revolutionary Syndicalism and Anarchism: Struggle with Capital and Power*.<sup>5</sup>

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essay, “How the Poor Die”; Schwarzbard, “Maria Siderovna Goldshmid.”

<sup>1</sup> Marie and Sophie would ultimately be buried in Cimetière parisien de Thiais and not Cimetière parisien d’Ivry with Isidor; (Maximoff, “Maria Isidorovna Goldsmith.”)

<sup>2</sup> Makhno, “Over the Grave.”

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In this issue of *Black Flag*, we are picking up the call from figures like Berkman and Maximoff by sharing nine freshly translated articles written by Goldsmith in the French and Russian anarchist press. As the years pass, we see Goldsmith’s attitude toward the Russian revolution shift from a mere rejection of Marxism and Hegelian dialectics to a wholesale rebuke of the USSR as a socialist project. The articles begin with “Problems of Tomorrow,” a three-part series Goldsmith

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published in *Les Temps Nouveaux* over the course of 1919–1920. These articles present an optimistic view of the Russian revolution while reaffirming a commitment to anarchist ideals. In “The Reasons for our ‘Maximalism,’” Goldsmith outlines her strong belief in the need for total revolution rather than minimalist reforms. But she also defends the Russian revolution, stating that while it remains to be seen how the revolution will pan out, it will certainly have “proclaimed the fall of capitalist domination and championed the rights of labour.” Capturing this

optimism succinctly, she declares that “the reign of the contemporary owner classes is virtually over.”

In her second article, “The Dictatorship of the Proletariat,” Goldsmith’s positive view on the Russian revolution continues perhaps more trepidatiously. She argues in this piece that “in addition to economic and political conquests, a higher stage of civilisation has been prepared from both the intellectual and moral perspectives” but that the revolution is veering toward State Socialism. Nevertheless, she says there is time for the peasants and workers to truly seize control of

<sup>3</sup> Berkman, “Correspondents Société”; Goldman, “Tom [Keell],” Steimer, “Correspondents Société”; Goldman, “Letters sent.”

<sup>4</sup> Maximoff, “Maria Isidorovna Goldsmith”; Berkman, “Steimer, Mollie”; Berkman, “Comrades Mratchny and [Mark] Holtz.”

<sup>5</sup> Dolzhanskaya, “Francesco Ghezzi.”

economic life rather than let it centralise in State bureaucracy. Her trilogy concludes with “Some Economic Milestones,” where she argues for stateless communist economic principles, rather than nationalism: “The Bolsheviks, however, were too imbued with social democratic and statist ideas which suggested to them only the well-known system of nationalisation. And it is there that they ended their revolution.” In one poetic moment discussing the need to abolish property ownership by any organisation or body, Goldsmith says, “The wind or the water that turns the wings or the wheels of a mill are not the property of anyone; they are simply harnessed for the purposes of production.”

Goldsmith’s outlook shifted radically in 1921, as it had for so many other anarchists, when Leon Trotsky and the Bolsheviks crushed the Kronstadt rebellion. Goldsmith’s article, “The Truth about Kronstadt,” is one of the earliest articles written for a western audience about what happened in that city. Goldsmith lays out her outrage in two clear ways: one, over the suppression of further revolution in Russia; and two, over the outright hypocrisy of the Bolsheviks in both rhetoric and action. On one hand, Trotsky claimed the Kronstadt sailors – some of whom were anarchist, others who were not – were so ardently committed to the revolution that they would put their own lives to keep others safe from reactionary forces (and did so following the dissolution of the Constitutional Assembly).<sup>1</sup> But when it came time to crush their rebellion, Trotsky and the Red Army did so without hesitation. Goldsmith painstakingly outlines the myriad ways that propaganda from the Russian government about the nature of the Kronstadt sailors was an utter fabrication in conflict with the clear historical record. “Kronstadt, a nest of reaction? It is impossible.”

From this point on, Goldsmith takes a decidedly negative view on the Russian revolution. One article in particular, “Marxist Utopia,” stands out as an excellent comparator for Goldsmith’s shift in perspective between 1919 and 1925 because it begins in much the same vein as her earlier “Dictatorship of the Proletariat.” However, “Marxist Utopia” was written for a Russian emigrée anarchist community – that of *Dielo Trouda* in Chicago – rather than for the French. Moreover, the trajectory of the revolution had become clearer over the six years since her writing of “Problems of Tomorrow.”

The latter half of “Marxist Utopia” is far less forgiving of the Bolshevik regime. Goldsmith lays the blame in part at the feet of Marxism, where she says that concepts like the Dictatorship of the Proletariat emerge from theory rather than practice. She lays the insensibility of this method of achieving stateless communism succinctly, “...the complete triumph of socialism — say, in Russia — requires sweeping elimination not only of all bourgeois-minded populations, but of all Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, anarchists, syndicalists, perhaps some opposition inside the Communist Party itself, and all discontented city and village residents. As a result of such an unprecedented purge, the country will appear as a band of government officials with a voiceless intimidated mass underneath. And this very moment will be chosen for the elimination of the State!”

We also see some of Goldsmith’s key theoretical contributions emerge in these texts. One emergent theme is the core anarchist idea of means and ends. Repeatedly, Goldsmith emphasises that freedom cannot arise from its opposite; that is, dictatorship cannot lead to liberation. This emerges in a particularly interesting manner in her review of Isaac Nachman Steinberg’s *The Moral Face of the Revolution* (1923). Here, Goldsmith uses the Red Terror to argue that not only is the contradiction of not unifying means and ends a fool’s errand, but that it also crushes the internal optimism of the revolutionaries as they watch what they fought for become the thing they hate: “...it is in the grip of an anguish that compromises the whole future of the revolution, because it kills faith and enthusiasm. And the cause is that the people feel outraged by the methods used by the leaders of this revolution in which they had put all their hopes.”

Goldsmith offers one of her most nuanced perspectives in “A Few Words on a Confusing Notion” where she addresses misapprehensions about what the term “transitional period” means. She posits that “The way toward a society free of all State coercion and founded upon the free association of individuals can only be achieved through social forms where free initiative increases and authority decreases.” For Goldsmith, a “transition” can only be a step toward liberation, or else “this is not a transition, but a step backward.”

Finally, in the two-part “On the Issue of Revision” (1925–1926), Goldsmith argues that it is important

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<sup>1</sup> Getzler, “Kronstadt,” 180–183.

to continuously evaluate anarchist ideas against real-world evidence, and points to the Russian revolution as a massive body of data. She then claims that the failures of the Russian revolution are, contrary to some thinkers, a reaffirmation of basic anarchist principles about the need to abolish the State and other oppressive systems. She goes on to discuss the transitional period once again, emphasising through an anarchist “class framework” that the question of what happens the day after the revolution is not the right question. “...if the classes have not yet been eliminated,” she says, “then the revolution has not achieved its goal and ‘the next day’ has not yet come.”

Goldsmith once said that “an ideal is realisable only to the extent that people believe in its possibility and devote their energy to it.” Like many other anarchists, she saw the need for repeated revolutions like the one attempted by the Kronstadt sailors. She believed in a future filled with hope if only we are willing to put in the work, always moving toward that final goal of a classless, moneyless, stateless society.

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# The Problems of Tomorrow<sup>1</sup>

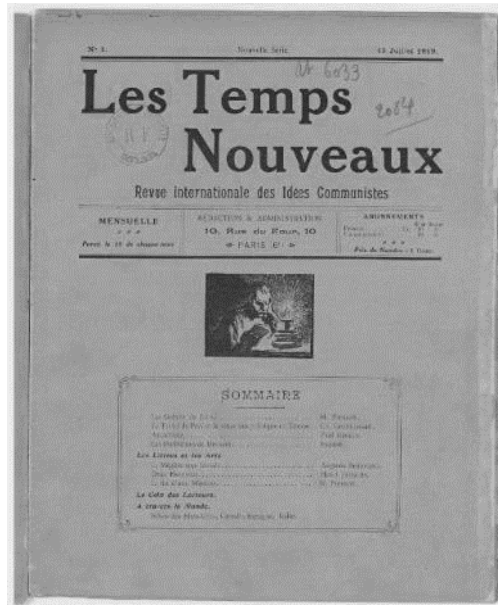
M. Isidine (Marie Goldsmith)<sup>2</sup>

## I – The Reasons for our “Maximalism”

“Les problèmes de demain - I - Les raisons de notre ‘maximalisme’” *Les Temps nouveaux* 15 July 1919

The old question of *maximalism* and *minimalism* takes on a completely different aspect today than it did a few years ago. Half is due to a lack of faith in the realisation of the socialist ideal in a tangible future, and half is for tactical reasons, the socialist parties having previously elaborated minimalistic compromises in the past making them the only real content of their platforms. Against this reformism, against this compromise, rose the anarchists, convinced that nothing can replace the whole ideal and that any fractionation of this necessarily total action can only harm it. And the conflict between these two points of view has filled the whole history of the socialist movement, from the International to the present.

But the situation has now been completely reversed, due to the revolutions that have broken out in the countries of Europe which, only a few years ago, were considered the least susceptible. The clearly social character of these revolutions indicates that the fall of bourgeois domination is no longer a subject of theoretical propaganda or historical predictions: it is tomorrow's reality. In Russia, in Austria, in Germany, the movement involves the great masses; it already terrifies the bourgeoisie of the countries that this contagion has not yet reached. Once again, the question of maximalism and minimalism arises. Among the militants of the socialist and trade unionist movement, some of them welcome with joy all the attempts at economic emancipation and strive to realise them; others stop, hesitating, in front of the enormity of the task to be accomplished and wonder if they will be up



to the task; they would like to run away from this responsibility, preferring to choose some other opportune time for the movement. It seems to them that the masses are not yet ready, and they would like to gain even only a few more years to be better prepared. And for that, they may task themselves with giving the movement a calmer course, so that in the meantime they may work toward improvements of the workers' legislative rights within the existing system or for purely corporative struggles.<sup>3</sup>

In order to choose between these two conflicting points of view, it is

not enough to let ourselves be guided by our revolutionary feelings, nor even by our devotion to the ideal. We have to look back to the lessons of History, we have to mitigate our feelings by criticism, we have to go back to the fundamental principles of our doctrine.

In resuming the publication of *Temps Nouveaux*, in the midst of these entirely changed conditions, we must, from the very outset, from our very first issue, give a clear answer to this vital question.<sup>4</sup> Our answer to this question will determine our stance on all future events to come.

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Let us remember our understanding of the process of all great social movements, a conception which is entirely different than that which inspires the parties who divide their objectives into ‘immediate’ and ‘final’ objectives.

How have the great movements of emancipation been carried out in the past? The struggle against the existing class order begins only among a small minority, which

<sup>1</sup> Translated by Christopher Coquard; Edited by Søren Hough & Christopher Coquard. All articles from the Marie Goldsmith Project were translated with the goal of preserving Goldsmith's original meaning and stylistic emphases. Footnotes by the translator or editors are prefaced “Ed:” while all other footnotes are from Marie Goldsmith's original text.

<sup>2</sup> Ed: Marie Goldsmith frequently wrote under pseudonyms. M. Isidine, or sometimes simply Isidine, was a common choice for the French anarchist press, along with M. Korn or M. Corn.

<sup>3</sup> Ed: “Corporative” is a term used to refer to a class-collaborationist economic and social system whereby key societal structures, such as banks, are organised into distinct bodies called “corporations” (not to be confused with the term corporation in modern capitalist society). Well after it was first proposed in the nineteenth century, this system was made popular when Benito Mussolini declared it a core plank of fascism.

<sup>4</sup> Ed: After *Les Temps Nouveaux* went out of print at the onset of World War I, the paper resumed printing in 1919 under the guidance of Jean Grave, Marc Pierrot, and Marie Goldsmith, and others.



has acutely felt the oppression – and hopes to end it – more than others. Oppression weighs too heavily on this small minority to wait until enough of those in other social groups manage to free themselves mentally and enter into the struggle. The number of people from other classes who join the ranks of this first wave will not be considerable at first. But the revolutionary minority fights at its own risk and peril without worrying whether it is supported or followed by other classes. However, little by little, it begins to garner broad support; and this can be seen, if not in action, then at least intellectually in other classes. The courageous actions of some diminishes the fear of others; and so the spirit of revolt grows. We do not always understand well the goal pursued by those who revolt, but we do understand what they are fighting against, and this brings them sympathy. Finally, the moment comes when an event, sometimes insignificant in itself – for example, a determined act of violence or something more arbitrary – provokes a revolutionary explosion. The following events are propulsive, new experience is acquired every day, and in the midst of this intense agitation, the mindset of the public shifts greatly. The abyss between social classes narrows.

At the end of the revolutionary period – and this is true whether the revolution is victorious or defeated – the general mentality of the masses is raised to a level which all of the efforts of long years of patient propaganda had not been able to reach beforehand. The ideal of the revolutionary minority may not have been fully realised, but what has been realised (in deed or in mind) comes closer to it, and this all the more so because this minority had put more conviction and intransigence into its revolutionary activity. Whatever was achieved now becomes a piece of its heritage for future generations; the rest will be the duty of the next generation, new avenues to be conquered by new eras inaugurated by the revolution. A revolution is not only the conclusion of the evolutionary period that preceded it: it is also the starting point of the one that will follow, the one that will be devoted precisely to the realisation of the ideas that, in the course of previous revolutions, could not find sufficient public support.

**At the end of the revolutionary period – and this is true whether the revolution is victorious or defeated – the general mentality of the masses is raised to a level which all of the efforts of long years of patient propaganda had not been able to reach beforehand.**

Even when a revolution is defeated, the principles it proclaims never perish. Each revolution of the nineteenth century was defeated, but each was a step forward toward a broader victory. The revolution of 1848, which disappointed the hopes of the workers, definitively dug, in the days of June, an abyss between the workers and the republican bourgeoisie; it also stripped socialism of its mystical and religious character and attributed to it a realistic social movement.<sup>1</sup> The Paris Commune, drowned in blood, undermined the cult of statist centralisation and proclaimed the universal principles of autonomy and federalism. And the Russian revolution? Whatever its future destiny, it will have proclaimed the fall of capitalist domination and championed the rights of labour; in a country where the state of oppression of the masses was more conducive to revolt than anywhere else, it proclaimed that it is these very masses who must henceforth be masters of their own lives. And whatever the future may hold, nothing can take this idea away from any future struggles: the reign of the contemporary owner classes is virtually over.

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It is these general considerations that will dictate the answer to the question: are the conditions ready yet for social revolution?

All debates on the question of whether the masses are “ready” or “not ready” are always tainted with error, whether they are pessimistic or optimistic. We have no way of ascertaining which factors could make a social milieu ready. And besides, how do we define “being ready”? Will we wait until the majority of the population has become socialist? But we know perfectly well that this is impossible under present conditions. If one could bring about by propaganda, by education alone, a radical transformation of the mind, of feelings and sentiments, of the whole mentality of humanity, why should one want a violent revolution, with all its sufferings? At whatever moment in history that one considers it, the mass is never “ready” for the future and it will never become so: a revolutionary event must occur beforehand. It is not in the power of revolutionaries to choose their moment beforehand, to prepare everything and to make the revolution explode according to their will, like fireworks.

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<sup>1</sup> Ed: The Revolutions of 1848 were a widespread set of European uprisings against monarchies. These revolutions popularised liberal and socialist ideas across the continent.

Those who always consider the great movements premature generally support the point of view that the certain “objective historical conditions” are essential: i.e., the degree of capitalist evolution, the state of industry, the development of productive forms, etc... But they do not see that these dogmas evaporate before their eyes – as have their minimum programs – under the pressure of real life. The most convinced Marxists are now obliged to recognise the fact that the social revolution has begun, not in a country of advanced capitalism, but in a country that was very backward from this point of view and that is especially agricultural, and that, consequently, there are other factors at play for revolution than the development of productive forces. Moreover, if they really wanted to penetrate a little further into the substance of the question, they could have drawn this conclusion from Marxism itself, thus transforming it into its opposite: into a theory of active progression, achieved by the efforts of individual members of society. To corroborate this, we can find, in Marx, a precious sentence: “Humanity only ever asks itself riddles that it can solve.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, if an ideal is conceived within a community, it is only because the necessary conditions for its realisation are present. Continuing this train of thought, we will say that from this moment, from the moment when an ideal is formulated by the minority of the vanguard, its realisation is only a question of the relationship between the forces at play: the past, which

has achieved its task, and the inevitable future. Gradually, at the price of painful struggles and of innumerable sacrifices, the scale leans toward the future.

At present, after a centuries-long secular struggle for economic equality, after centuries-long secular propaganda of socialist ideas, we are now witnessing a bold attempt to achieve it. Our progress will still have its setbacks both in its struggle against the enemies and within our inner evolution, and we should not think that we will find ourselves tomorrow in an anarchist society such as we conceive it. However, we cannot achieve a better life without actively trying to reach it; experience is the only way forward, there is no other way. Instead of asking ourselves: are the conditions ripe? Are the masses ready? We should rather ask: *are we ready ourselves?* What practical measures can we propose in the aftermath of victory, for the realisation of *our* socialism, of communism organising itself without the help of, and against, any State interference? What are the measures that should be developed, and under what conditions should be studied beforehand and implemented?” This should be our greatest preoccupation; what we must do is not to fear being overtaken by events, but to actively prepare ourselves for them now, always remembering the truth that an ideal is realisable only to the extent that people believe in its possibility and devote their energy to it.

## II – The Dictatorship of the Proletariat<sup>2</sup>

“Les problèmes de demain - II - La Dictature du Proletariat”, *Les Temps nouveaux*, 15 November 1919

The realisation of socialism has left the realm of dreams and theoretical propaganda; it has become nearer to us, it has become an urgent problem. And if it is important to answer the question of the methods that lead to this realisation, and that are the most suitable to assure its victory, it is even more important to have a clear idea of what must be done immediately *after* victory so that the revolution brings the greatest amount of happiness with the least amount of suffering possible.

The idea of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” currently has a great influence on people’s minds. It appears to mean that the workers are now masters of social life, masters of their own destiny, without any exploiters or oppressors above them. It seems to be the direct and immediate realisation of socialism. In France especially, where the labour movement has not yet been penetrated by Marxist theory and jargon, this formula leads to misunderstanding. It contains, within itself, a contradiction: a dictatorship “is always the unlimited power” of a single or small group; what can the dictatorship of a class be? It is obvious that a class

cannot exercise its authority but through its representatives, through someone it has specifically delegated, or, more simply stated, someone that it believes has the right to act in its interest. In short, a new power is established, the power of the socialist party or of its most influential factions, and this power then takes charge of regulating and legislating the destiny of the working class. And this is not an abuse or a re-interpretation of the concept of a “dictatorship of the proletariat”; it is in fact its very essence. It is completely derived from Marxist theory, from the way that this theory conceives the evolution of society. Let us summarise it in a few words.

By definition, political power lies in the hands of the economically dominant class. The bourgeoisie, after having replaced the feudalists economically, have also taken their place politically, at least in the most industrialised countries of Europe and America. Since then, the entire political activity of the bourgeois class has been aimed at safeguarding its interests and consolidating its domination. But now, in the course of

<sup>1</sup> Ed: This partial quote comes from the preface of Karl Marx’s *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). The full quote concludes “...since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the

material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation.”

<sup>2</sup> See the first issue.

economic evolution, the proletariat is taking the place of the bourgeoisie as the class most capable of assuring the development of productive forces; from this point of view alone, political power must also be returned to them. This new State, the State of the proletariat, will henceforth be concerned only with the interests of this specific class, which will in turn become the dominant class. This is the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. A

natural objection therefore arises: the dominated class supersedes the dominant class; now, the economic exploitation abolished by elevating the previously most exploited classes brings into existence more strife. Thereafter, new class struggles emerge since previously conceived classes become a thing of the past – and so the cycle continues endlessly. This cyclical contradiction is solved partly thanks to the Marxist conception of the way in which a socialist transformation can be carried out. It begins with the seizure of power by a socialist party; but what does a socialist government do next?

Marxist literature does not abound in future projects: social democrats are too utopia-phobic for that. But the little we know about them is enough for us to understand that socialism will have to be realised gradually, during entire historical epochs. During this period, classes will not have ceased to exist, and capitalist exploitation will not have ended: it will only be attenuated and softened with regard to the *needs of the proletariat*. They then become the class protected by the State, while the circumstances of the bourgeoisie are made increasingly more difficult. And so now here we are, at the dawn of Marxism, and Marx himself, where the *Communist Manifesto* enumerates these gradual measures that the socialist government will have to adopt:

1. Expropriation of landed property and confiscation of land rent for the benefit of the state.
2. Highly progressive taxation.
3. Abolition of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.

5. Centralisation of credit in the hands of the State by means of a national bank with State capital with exclusive monopoly.
6. Centralisation, in the hands of the State, of all the means of transportation.
7. Increase of the national factories and of the instruments of production, clearing of the uncultivated lands and improvement of cultivated lands.

8. Compulsory work for all, organisation of industrial armies, particularly for agriculture.

9. Combination of agricultural and industrial work.

10. Free public education for all children, abolition of child labour in factories.

The application of this program will be done in a peaceful or violent way, according to the circumstances, but in any case it will be done with the help of strong political power. Defining political power as “the organised power of one class for the oppression of another,” Marxism thus envisages, as its ultimate goal, a society that is only an “association of men” without any power. It is indeed a march toward anarchy, but by way of its opposite, an all-powerful

State.

Fifty years later, Kautsky, in *The Social Revolution*, proclaims that “the conquest of political power by a hitherto oppressed class, that is to say, the *political revolution*, constitutes the essential nature of the *social revolution*.”<sup>1</sup> He then indicates a series of legislative measures intended to operate little by little, with or without financial compensation, the “expropriation of the expropriators”: progressive taxation on large incomes and fortunes, measures against unemployment, the nationalisation of transportation and of large landed property, etc.

What is the possible regime of this “dictatorship of the proletariat”? A State stronger than it ever was, because it holds in its hands the whole economic life of the

<sup>1</sup> Ed: Karl Kautsky (1854-1938) was a leading orthodox Marxist philosopher and politician who was a steadfast proponent of social democracy. He spent most of his life in

Germany and was a friend of Friedrich Engels. Kautsky opposed the Bolshevik revolution in Russia which rendered him a rhetorical target of figures such as Vladimir Lenin.

country; it is the master of everything and can literally deprive every citizen of their livelihood at any given moment. As a means of fighting any opposition, it is very effective. The workers are the employees of the State; and it is therefore against it that they must assert their rights. The struggle against this gigantic employer becomes very intense; strikes quickly turn into political crimes. A workers' control council could be created, but it will only be exercised to the extent that the employing State will allow it. It is however possible that the workers could enjoy other advantages of a political nature from this situation, such as the exclusive right to vote, for example, or in being privileged in the distribution of products. But, if we reflect carefully on it, these advantages do not constitute any progress because they do not bring any justice into society and only serve to give rise to more hatred. Instead of abolishing the bourgeoisie *as a class* and placing each member of the bourgeoisie in a situation where they could and should provide useful work, they are allowed (even if only "temporarily") to live off the work of others, but are also furthermore punished by being deprived of certain things to which they are entitled as human beings.

The bourgeoisie must be put into a situation where it is impossible for them to harm; the class must be deprived of its armed forces and of everything that constitutes its economic domination. Repressive measures which target only individual members of the bourgeoisie are a useless means of revenge. It is also a dangerous slope: we think that we are doing revolutionary work, but instead, we are contributing nothing toward the construction of a new life. Furthermore: this civil war against the internal enemy, against an evil that we have neglected to entirely uproot, increases the prestige of the militaristic elements of society, of the leaders of military brigades of all factions that dominate both sides. The struggle therefore becomes uniquely a question of military strength. And in all evidence, any and all construction of our future finds itself postponed to calmer times. But we are missing the opportunity, the people are getting tired, and the danger of reaction increases...

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That is why, regarding the method of implementation, we propose a different method in opposition to this view towards the realisation of socialism.

The opposition between these two points of view dates from the early days of the International, from the

dispute between Marx and Bakunin. It was Bakunin who first proclaimed in his "The Policy of the International" that true socialism differs from "bourgeois socialism" in that the former affirms that the revolution must be an "immediate and direct implementation concerning the entirety of all aspects of social life," while the latter affirms that "the political transformation must precede the economic transformation."<sup>1</sup> The tendency that continued the tradition of the first Federalist International – our tendency – developed and clarified this idea of a direct economic revolution in the years that were to follow. First in *Le Révolté*, then in *La Révolte*, Kropotkin showed by historical examples that the progress of humanity is due to the spontaneous activity of the people and not because of the action of the State; and, at the same time, he developed the program of free communism, the principle "to each according to his needs," which is the only one that is compatible with a stateless society.<sup>2</sup> He also showed that the economic revolution cannot be realised *little by little* and by fragments, and that one would thus only end up disrupting the economic life without allowing space to rebuild it on new foundations; that the communist distribution must be, in the interest of the revolution, inaugurated immediately after a victory. He juxtaposed his "Conquest of Bread" against the other idea of "Complete Power" and showed the necessity, for the socialists, to actively look for new avenues outside the tired old formulas.

The anarchist movement as a whole was inspired by these fundamental ideas. Their field of action was especially expanded from the moment when the workers' movement in France, slowed down after the fall of the Commune, started to breathe the revolutionary spirit once again. First, under the influence of F. Pelloutier, and then consequently with the numerous anarchists who entered the unions, was born the great movement of revolutionary syndicalism, which, during the first ten years of the twentieth century, carried within it the seeds of all of the hopes for workers' emancipation.<sup>3</sup> Syndicalism has already accepted the idea of the immediate takeover of the means of production, and, even more, has made it more precise: the means by which they are to be realised already exist, they are the unions. The general strike, the prelude of revolutionary expropriation, became the final goal. Let us recall that in this respect its preparation seemed at a given moment a work so important and so urgent that the *Voix du Peuple* opened (around 1902, if I am not mistaken) a specific section in which the unions

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<sup>1</sup> Ed: This article was published in the newspaper *L'Égalité* in 1869.

<sup>2</sup> Ed: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." This slogan (and variations thereof) has been closely associated with socialism and communism since the first half of the nineteenth century. Although it rose to prominence following Karl Marx's use of the phrase in the

1870s, its connection to the socialist movement is much broader and more historical.

<sup>3</sup> Ed: Fernand Pelloutier (1867-1901) was a French Marxist labor organiser who turned to anarchism in the 1890s. According to the anarchist Marc Pierrot, Goldsmith's radical student group, the ESRI, was friendly with Pelloutier (Marc Pierrot, "Marie Goldsmith", *Plus Loin*, March 1933).

were invited to indicate what each one of them could do in the immediate days after victory to assure the continuity of the production in their respective fields, to establish relationships with other unions and consumers, etc., etc. This initiative, which did not seem to have found sufficient popularity, was nonetheless very important; even more important would be the task of taking it up again now that we are closer to practical achievements.

Thus was, from that time until the war, the fundamental character of revolutionary syndicalism. From France, it spread to other countries, to other international workers' movements. Anarcho-syndicalist ideas penetrated into the writings of sociologists, jurists, economists; even scholars foreign to the labour movement began to find that the renovation of economic life with, as its foundation, a free association of producers, is perhaps not utopian, that it is perhaps in this way that capitalism will be overthrown and that a new form of political existence will be inaugurated in the State.

The war stopped this evolution and made the course of things deviate toward another direction. The State suddenly became stronger, its competence expanded; the workers' organisations, on the contrary, slowed down their struggles or directed them, because of practical difficulties, toward more immediate achievements. The reformist tendency became preponderant.

The revolutionary spirit reappeared in the world with the Russian revolution, but in a different form: that of State Socialism.

The time has not yet come to draw definitive conclusions from the communist experiment tried in Russia; we do not know many things and it is difficult for us to evaluate the role of the different factors in its successes and failures. But what we can say is this: what we know does not affect our fundamental point of view. We do not intend to develop here all the arguments that make us believe that the governmental apparatus is unfit to carry out a social revolution, that only the action of the workers' groups, which have become in turn producer groups, are solely able to accomplish such tasks. This demonstration has been made in our literature many times. But we believe it useful to recall the general conclusions.

We think, as we have always thought, that immediately taking possession of the land and the instruments of production and the management of the economic life by

peasant and worker organisations is more likely to assure the material well-being of Society than will State decrees.

We think that this mode of social and political transformation is better suited to mitigate conflict and avoid civil war because it includes greater freedom and greater varieties of organisation than the simple introduction by authority of some unitary reform.

We think that the direct participation of the population in the construction of new economic forms makes the victories of the revolution more stable and better ensures their endurance.

We think, finally, that in addition to economic and political conquests, a higher stage of civilisation has been prepared from both the intellectual and moral perspectives.

The French workers possess a sufficient heritage of ideas and experience of struggle to find the path that leads most directly toward total emancipation. To proclaim the fall of capitalism and the reign of socialism is a great thing, and we give credit for this to the socialist government of Russia. But we also want socialism to be put into practice, we want a new era to open up before humanity, and we want no weapons to be provided to the reactionaries through the faults of the socialists. For this reason, we who work in France must take advantage of the moment when there is still time to *prepare* ourselves by studying

what the workers' organisations can and must do "the day after" the revolution.

We consider of the utmost importance the most serious and complete discussion of all questions concerning the reorganisation of the economy toward the moment when the workers will finally be able to make themselves masters of their own destinies. This is not a mere question of debate, nor even of propaganda; it is rather a question of careful study. It is no longer enough to say that such and such an order of things is desirable, nor even to demonstrate it: it is now necessary to indicate the practical measures which are *immediately* realisable with the means we presently have at our disposal.

It is to this undertaking to which we now call upon our comrades.

**We consider of the utmost importance the most serious and complete discussion of all questions concerning the reorganisation of the economy toward the moment when the workers will finally be able to make themselves masters of their own destinies.**

### III – Some Economic Milestones<sup>1</sup>

“Les problèmes de demain - III - Quelques jalons d’ordre économique”, *Les Temps nouveaux*, 15 April 1920

The future forms that the production and distribution of products will take are of the utmost significance concerning our future projections: upon these will be founded the entire nature of the society that replaces the capitalist regime. This question did not suddenly appear yesterday, but its solution has become urgent; and furthermore, the experience of the Russian revolution provides us with useful indications, sometimes confirming, sometimes reversing certain conceptions that were formulated in the past in a completely theoretical way.

To solve these questions in a concrete form, that is to say, to elaborate a *plan* of economic organisation for “tomorrow,” to indicate the frameworks and institutions to be created for its realisation, is a task that goes far beyond the competence not only of the author of this article, but also of a publication like *Les Temps Nouveaux*. This is the work of specialists: workers, technicians of all kinds, directly involved in production; only their professional organisations and their colleagues can discuss, in full knowledge of the facts, the concrete measures to be taken in the present as in the future.

But every socialist, and every group of propagandists, has not only the right, but the duty to establish for themselves and for their comrades an idea toward a general point of view, to reflect on the experience that is unfolding before our eyes, and to draw certain general lines according to which they would like to see the more competent thought of the specialists work. It is considerations of this kind that will be dealt with in the present article.

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Of the existing conceptions of the mode of organisation of production in socialist societies, *nationalisation* is the most accessible and widely accepted. The passage of the means of production to an egalitarian society is conceived in the programs of all the Statist socialist parties as their handing-over to the State, because society is, by their definition, represented by the State. No matter what form it takes, whether parliamentary,

Soviet, or in other forms, it is always this centralised organisation that holds political power that is also the master of natural resources, the means of production, and the means of product distribution.

We can clearly see to what degree the State finds itself strengthened by all of this. In addition to political power, it now controls every facet of life. The dependence of each citizen upon it reaches its zenith. The boss-State is a particularly authoritarian boss: and like any boss, it wants to be a complete master of its

**The boss-State is a particularly authoritarian boss: and like any boss, it wants to be a complete master of its business and tolerates the interference of workers only when it is absolutely impossible to avoid it.**

business and tolerates the interference of workers only when it is absolutely impossible to avoid it. In the economic domain, the State won’t even tolerate the idea of being a constitutional monarchy: it will always tend toward autocracy. The concept of Jaurès: that of the gradual democratisation, by means of the State, of the economic regime, analogous to the political democratisation accomplished in the past, now more than ever appears to be a utopia.<sup>2</sup> In the capitalist regime, the workers and employees of the State are the most dependent of all, and on the opposite pole of the social organisation, in the collectivist regime of the Bolsheviks, it is the same: the

workers lose little by little both the right of control and their factory Committees and even their great means of struggle: the right to strike. And as a crowning achievement, it is the mobilisation of labour, “armies” of workers governed by a militaristic discipline. And this is fatal: no power ever restricts itself if nothing forces it to do so; and when the people in power pursue an idea, when they are convinced that it can only be achieved by coercion, they will show themselves to be even more intractable, more absolute in their right to dispose of the existence of its citizens.

It is generally the need to increase production that justifies the suppression of all individual and collective rights of the workers. This is how the Bolshevik power explains the creation of its compulsory labour armies. However, apart from any question of principle, the mere consideration of just the expenses – both in terms of human forces and in money – that any such massive

<sup>1</sup> See issues 1 and 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ed: Jean Jaurès (1859-1914) was a French social democrat and anti-militarist who was known as a significant thinker and orator. He was assassinated in 1914 because his anti-war position was seen as capitulation to the Germans.

bureaucracy requires, which is a necessary condition of such a vast extension of the power of the State, shows that this calculation is erroneous. In Russia, bureaucratic administration of factories absorbs most of their income, not to mention the number of workers it takes away from other more useful work. And the desired result is far from being achieved. The boss-State is ill-equipped to fight against this decrease in labour productivity which necessarily follows great catastrophes, such as war, famine, lack of necessities, etc., etc. Additionally, the socialist powers of the Bolsheviks are not able to find other means to fight against this issue other than with measures that have always been known, and against which workers and socialists of all countries have always resisted: piecework wages, the bonus system, the Taylor system, etc...<sup>1</sup> Thus everywhere hourly work is replaced by piecework, the twelve-hour day replaces the eight-hour day, the age of compulsory work is lowered from sixteen to fourteen. And, finally, this mobilisation of work (a measure of which a few years ago, no socialist party would have been believed capable of implementing) which reminds us well of the times of serfdom...

If socialists, who certainly do not aim at the degradation of workers' personality and take such measures only as a last resort, are obliged to go so far against all their ideals, it should only be because within the limits of their choices, which has for framework and for a tool exclusively the benefit of the State, no other way out exists. And yet here is a fact, small in itself, but significant. In the course of the very opinionated struggle of the Soviet government against the disorganisation of industry, only one measure was taken which proved to be effective. It is *voluntary work on Saturdays*.

“The Communist Party has made voluntary Saturday work mandatory for its members ... Every Saturday, in various regions of the Soviet Republic, barges and fuel wagons are unloaded, railroads repaired, wheat, fuel, and other goods for the population and the war front are loaded, wagons and locomotives repaired, etc. Gradually the great mass of workers and peasants began to join the ‘Saturday workers,’ to help the Soviet power, to contribute with their voluntary work to fight the cold, hunger and general economic disorganisation.”<sup>2</sup> From other sources we learn that the productivity of voluntary work far exceeds that of paid factory work. There is no need to say how instructive this example is. In the midst of all the measures by which workers were sometimes attracted by high wages, according to the traditional

principle of the capitalist regime, and sometimes subjected to military discipline, only one has proved effective: it is the call to work – free and conscious work by people who know that they are doing something useful. This is a striking example in support of the truth that the most “utopian” solutions are at the same time the most practical, and that if we want to obtain “realisations” today, the surest way is still to start from the final goal.

But these considerations proceed from a mindset foreign to the idea of the State and obligatory work in its service.

Here is another formula, at first sight more seductive. It is the transfer of businesses into the hands of the workers or of their corresponding professional organisations. This is the system which, in France, is expressed by the formula “the mines to the miners.” During the first year of the Russian revolution, even before the Bolsheviks came to power, there were a number of such examples of the workers taking over their factories. This was easy for them (the workers), because the bosses, during that time, wanted nothing better than to abandon their businesses. Later, the Bolsheviks introduced “workers’ control” in all factories; but this control was only momentary and had no practical effect: where the workers were weak and poorly organised, it remained an unrespected moot point; and where the workers were aware of their rights, they said to themselves – quite logically – that if they already had control of the factories, they had no further need to leave them to their former owners. And so they took it over, declaring it the property of those who work there. But it was always the property of a group of people who merely replaced the original bourgeois owner. This could only result in a production cooperative in the best of circumstances. The collective owners were concerned – like the previous ones – solely with their own interests; like the others, they competed against one another in order to attract contracts from the State, etc. Egoism and the thirst for gain, to be the characteristic of any of these groups, new or old, were no less strong.

Another consideration, a practical one, makes it impossible to extend such a system to the entirety of society. There are businesses which receive large profits: those which produce widely spread goods, or are in the business of transporting said goods; the workers who are employed in them and who become their owners are, in this context, privileged. But there are many sectors of the economy which give no profit at all, requiring instead continuous expenditures: schools,

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<sup>1</sup> Ed: “Scientific management,” also known as Taylorism, is the system proposed by the engineer Frederick Winslow Taylor in 1909 in his book, *The Principles of Scientific Management*. This system was meant to bureaucratise the workplace to promote efficiency and to “control alienated labor” (Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The*

*Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998], 62).

<sup>2</sup> Official organ of the Bolshevik Government *Économicheskaia Jizn (Vie économique)*, no. 213 (cited in *Pour la Russie*, no. 10, article by Kerensky).

hospitals, road maintenance, street cleaning, etc., etc. What will be the yields of those who are employed in these fields of work? How will they be able to live if these businesses become the source of their livelihood? With what means will they be able to operate them and who will pay their wages? Obviously, the principle of cooperative ownership must be modified as far as they are concerned. We can imagine, it is true that it will be the consumers who will pay; but this would be a step backwards instead of being considered a progress, because one of the best results of economic evolution is the free access to certain historical conquests of civilisation: hospitals, schools, bridges, roads, water pipes, water wells, among others. To ask people to pay for them would be to add some new privileges to those that are already well possessed, and to take away the means of meeting the most essential needs from everyone else.

All these considerations – and many others – make such a system undesirable. In the current context – to which we are always obliged to refer to as if it were the only socialist experience that has ever been created so far – the disadvantages of this system, introduced at the beginning of the Bolshevik period, have led the Soviet government to adopt, as the only possible remedy, nationalisation.

We should have, it is true, explored for a third solution: a system that could give workers direct control of their economic lives, without the inconveniences of cooperative property. The Bolsheviks, however, were too imbued with social democratic and statist ideas which suggested to them only the well-known system of nationalisation. And it is there that they ended their revolution.

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Let us try then, for our part, to find this third way out: a system which would give the workers the management of economic life, but without the disadvantages of corporate ownership. And, first of all, let's go back to our fundamental principles: our communism, true communism, and not that already outdated communism of 1848 that the Bolsheviks have recently rediscovered and adopted as the name of their party to replace the other name, too dishonoured by compromises, of "social democrats."<sup>1</sup> Let us try then, in the light of these

principles, to orient ourselves a little in the questions that arise.

If we recognise neither nationalisation in the hands of the State, nor the formula "the mines to the miners," what alternate forms can the transfer of the means of production to the hands of workers' organisations (unions, summits, factory committees, or such others) take?

First of all, the means of production cannot become the *property* of these organisations: they must only have the *functional use* of them. The wind or the water that turns the wings or the wheels of a mill are not the property of anyone; they are simply harnessed for the purposes of production. In the same vein, the earth should not be the property of anyone; one who cultivates it *uses it*, but it

belongs to the whole community – that is, to no one in particular. Likewise, the instruments of labour made by the hands of workers: they are a collective wealth, a common property, *used* by those who need to use them at any given moment for any given task. This being accepted, how can we then imagine: first, the future organisation of production, and then that of distribution?

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It is obvious that only the whole of the professional organisations concerning any branch of production

can plan their production; these professional organisations will include both the workers themselves and the more learned specialists – engineers, chemists, etc. Each branch of production is closely linked, on the one hand, with those who supply it with raw materials, and on the other hand, with the organisations or the public who consume its products. And since in these types of relationships the most critical role is the understanding of all needs and possibilities, there must be groups or Committees that will be able to concentrate, compile, and manage all the necessary statistical information. Their role must be strictly limited to that of suppliers of statistical input; the subsequent use of this material would no longer be their concern in the future. They would not be able to issue any decree; those decisions belong exclusively to the larger professional associations. The opinions of these statistical Committees would be of no more coercive a

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<sup>1</sup> Ed: Goldsmith alludes to the fact that the Bolsheviks, once a part of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party,

rebranded themselves as the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1918.



nature than the indications given by an architect, the advice of a hygienist, or that of a pedagogue, etc.

As for the various branches of production, their modes of organisation can vary greatly according to the technical particularities of each association: some can accept complete autonomy of their constituent groups, while others can exact perfectly coordinated action. All that is to be desired is that there should be, in each specialty, not just one central organisation that governs *everything*, but a large number of *specialised* organisations, each with well-defined tasks. We cannot, of course, foresee the various ways in which this style of organising work may be envisioned in future contexts. However, adapting it to the needs of the moment may not be an excessively difficult task.

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But there are much thornier questions which require continuous innovation because nothing like this has ever been attempted before. Who will be the *owner* of these means of production, which the professional organisations will manage, and of the objects produced – that is to say, of all collective wealth? If not the State, if not the corporations, then who? What does the sentence: “The means of production belong to the community” *concretely* represent? Who will represent these communities? Who and by what right will they dispose of the products? To whom will the profits of these sales be given? Who will pay the wages?

It is in these questions that it is necessary to fully develop our communist idea, our great principle “from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs,” and to draw all its subsequent consequences.

Who will dispose of the products of these works? These products must constitute a common wealth available to each person for his or her own consumption, either if they are objects of immediate consumption, or if they belong to the professional organisations that use these products (if they are raw materials or instruments of work). Individuals or organisations can draw upon these stocks to the extent of their needs and, in the case of insufficient quantities, after reaching a fair agreement with other interested consumers or organisations. No one *actually* owns these products other than the workers themselves who will be responsible for fulfilling any orders.

In the same way, the question arises: who will profit from the sales? There is no issue here, because there is actually no sale, because the products are not commodities, but simply objects of consumption, equally accessible to all. Communism does not recognise the distinction between objects of consumption – *private* property and the means of production – and *collective* property. It does not even recognise a difference in configuration between them; coal, for example, where would it be classified? It is an indispensable element of production, and yet it is also

one of the most necessary objects of individual consumption. The tendency of communism is to make all objects free. Everyone will agree that housing, food, necessary clothing, heating, etc., must be made available to everyone in the same way as medical aid or street lighting, which even today’s capitalist society provides. Every human being has the right to these basic necessities by the mere fact of their existence, and no one has the right to deprive them. The individual’s share of this social consumption can be determined by many factors, individual and/or social: first of all, by the needs of each person, and for everything that is in excess of that: alas!

In today’s Europe, instead of an abundance of products, there is rather a scarcity, and this will force us to be better prepared for future needs. A necessary minimum (calculated as much as possible on some kind of average consumption), will be to establish and to organise fair distribution of needs based on common agreement. Rations can and should be different for different categories of people. To establish these categories, it is again on the differences of needs that there must be discretion; there will be taken into account: the age, the state of health, their ability to defend themselves, etc... Many considerations will have to be taken into account, moreover and especially in the distribution of the products: the needs of the community, the need to make reserves for the future and to keep a certain quantity of products for any potential exchanges with other communities, etc., etc. There is only one factor that we refuse to introduce into these calculations: it is the sum of work spent by each individual.

Here we can foresee the protests coming. The spectacle of *today’s* society, where those who produce the least consume the most, revolts our sense of justice and makes us declare immediately: to each person the fruits of their labour and to each proportionally according to the labour provided.

But, in spite of this seemingly natural progression of thinking, we think that it is not on this principle – however legitimate it may seem in contrast to the flagrant injustices of our time – that the society of the future must be founded. The revenge that the people may exercise against their oppressors at the time of the revolution is perhaps historically just, but it is not upon this revenge that the future reign of the people can be founded after victory: it is rather on the principle of human solidarity. Likewise in questions of land and resource distribution.

And we should not be told that the bourgeoisie must first be repressed and that the victory of the working class must first lead to a mode of distribution that places labour at the proper position it deserves. The class struggle *ends* with the workers’ victory and the distinction between workers and parasites no longer exists. With the possibility of free work in a free society

being provided to everyone, the number of those who refuse it will be so small that it will not justify the creation of a new class of parasites in the form of an invasive bureaucracy, and in the next generation the traces of this old parasitism will have disappeared.

To give to each one in proportion to their work is, if you like, a just principle; but it is a justice of a lower order, such as, for instance, the idea of rewarding merit and punishing vice. We shall not dwell upon all the philosophical and practical reasons which lead us to reject this stance. What could we possibly add, moreover, to the arguments that Kropotkin provided when he laid the foundations of communist anarchism?<sup>1</sup> Let us only say – for those comrades who are unaware of it – that at the other edge of socialist thought, Marx agreed with him, saying that “the narrow horizon of bourgeois law will only be overcome” when the remuneration of work has given way to the distribution of the tiller according to the needs of each individual.<sup>2</sup> We want to go beyond bourgeois law and bourgeois justice. Every human has a right to existence by the mere fact that they are human. Then, and also because they are human beings living in society, they will apply themselves to bring their share of work to the common

treasure. This is the only possible guarantee against any further exploitation and against endless conflicts.

We therefore reject the very idea of a *wage* lifestyle; we differentiate the two questions: that of production and that of consumption, leaving between them only the link which results from the fact that the total quantity of manufactured products must be regulated according to the needs of consumption. This is the only order of things compatible with a system in which professional organisations can *manage* production without needing to *own* the instruments of labour. It is also the only one compatible with a free society, free from the coercive power of a State.

We do not believe, of course, that the very day after the next revolution, all of this will work out so well: without conflicts, without mixing with our past bourgeois elements. We know that it is highly unlikely that this complete and pure communism can be achieved at once. But we also know that that is only by being inspired that any future advancements can be made. And that is why it seems so important to us, so infinitely desirable, that it is in this spirit that the milestones of the future are laid.

# The Moral Face of the Revolution

**M. Isidine (Marie Goldsmith)**

“Le visage moral de la révolution”, *Plus Loin*, March 15, 1920<sup>3</sup>

Among all the questions that those who foresee a forthcoming and profound social transformation are currently asking themselves, there is one that is extremely painful for the consciousness of humanity: it is the question of violence, of the right of the leaders of the revolution to impose their decisions by force on the masses, of dictatorship and revolutionary terror. This question is discussed everywhere, but there is one country where it has already passed from the realm of ideas into that of realisation, where experience has been made of a social revolution using dictatorship as its weapon – that is Russia.

That is why everything that can make the results of this experience known, both material and moral, deserves the greatest attention; as do all the opinions formed on this subject under the influence of life among the militants of the Russian revolution. They have infinitely more authority than what we, who did not live this experience of socialist dictatorship, can say here.

That is why we thought it would be useful to make known in France a book, recently published but written for the most part in 1920, and whose author is a member of the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party.<sup>4</sup> The title of this book is *The Moral Face of the Revolution* and bears this dedication that prejudices its spirit:

To the Kronstadt sailors of 1921, who on the icy plains of the Gulf of Finland defended the October Revolution, sustained a deadly struggle, and did not dishonour it with a terror of revenge, I dedicate this book.<sup>5</sup>

The author shows us the great disillusionment that the results of the revolution brought to the workers. “Never,” he says, “has the contradiction between what the people saw in the red blaze of the revolution and the heavy weight, like lead, that now oppresses them in their daily lives, been so glaring and so visible.” Terrible misery kills the intellectual and moral life of the masses which have only just awakened; the bonds of

<sup>1</sup> Ed: For further elaboration from Marie Goldsmith on Kropotkin’s ideas of anarchist communism, see “Kropotkin’s Communism,” translated in *Black Flag* Vol. 2 No. 3 (2022).

<sup>2</sup> K. Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Programme.”

<sup>3</sup> Translated by Christopher Coquard; Edited by Søren Hough & Christopher Coquard

<sup>4</sup> This party, not very numerous, but of very combative spirit, places itself ideologically between the socialist-

revolutionaries and the anarchists. Its leader and spokesperson is Marie Spiridonova. At the beginning, after the October Revolution, this party collaborated with the Bolsheviks and shared power with them. It broke away after Brest-Litovsk.

<sup>5</sup> Ed: *Нравственный лик революции (The Moral Face of the Revolution)* by the Socialist Revolutionary Isaac Nachman Steinberg was published in 1923.

solidarity between people are loosened, the feelings of hatred and distrust develop and paralyse all creative work. The misfortunes of the external war and the civil war, the material misery, are not enough to explain this state of affairs: there is a deeper moral cause. "The soul of the revolutionary people is seriously ill"; it is in the grip of an anguish that compromises the whole future of the revolution, because it kills faith and enthusiasm. And the cause is that the people feel outraged by the *methods* used by the leaders of this revolution in which they had put all their hopes.

The author's assessment of this is in complete agreement with everything we have always said about the distinctions made by the programs of the various parties between "political revolution" and "economic revolution," between the "minimum program" and our "final goal." Like us, he sees the *popular* revolution as a phenomenon that cannot be dissected in this way.

Revolution is obviously the result of material suffering, but it is more than that. The people bring to it their need for *justice*, their own *moral* ideals – admittedly vague and imprecise, but tending to a *new* life, absolutely different from the old one. This is why its revolutionary action extends to all areas of life and spirit: the political and economic regime, religious and moral conceptions, and family life. And if, instead of realising justice, revolutionary practice proves to be unjust, immoral, and oppressive, the people become troubled and end up losing interest in the revolution. This is precisely what happened when, in 1918, systematic violence and terror entered into the revolutionary mores and became so well-entrenched that its contagion now reaches almost all revolutionary circles in other countries.

In his critique of Bolshevik terror, Steinberg does not take a purely moral standpoint, repudiating all violence; he admits violence in certain cases and within certain limits. But he criticises the system of terror because of the damage it causes to the very goal it pursues. Socialism, he says (and in this we agree with him once again), is not only an economic idea; it aims at a certain organisation of production, but also at a more just way of life for humanity. It must therefore choose its means. The Marxists, following the Jesuits and the Jacobins, say: the end justifies the means. This may be true when one considers only *external* success, but this success does not prove that the goal has been reached; for it to

be *truly* reached, it requires certain means, to the exclusion of others.

Socialism wants the happiness not of an abstract "humanity," but of the real, concrete individual, and no formula justifies the crushing of this individual. "We fight, not for the proletarian or the peasant, but for the oppressed person. We fight, therefore, not the landowner or the bourgeois, but the regime of exploitation."

And what were the consequences of forgetting these truths? Governmental centralisation and political oppression have made it so that "everywhere the popular masses have remained indifferent; the workers *do not create*: they carry out drudgery." This is why nothing succeeds for the government: all its measures, economic and political, fail.<sup>1</sup> The productivity of labour depends not only on economic but also on moral reasons; the system of terror has dealt it a mortal blow.

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Instead of emulation in work, it gives rise to fear, fraud, and egoism. "Not one of the millions of inhabitants cares to create anything socially useful or valuable in the long-term." To the extent that a revolutionary power is allowed to appeal to self-interest, it must show the advantages of solidarity and understanding; otherwise, misery provokes the struggle

of each against all, which is the most deplorable of economic systems and conflicts between the various categories of the dispossessed.

In the moral domain, the same failure occurs. Systematic terror leads to police rule, provokes perpetual revolts, and makes people hate the government. And if reaction has failed in Russia, despite all the armies raised with the help of the Allies, it is thanks to the hostility of the people in the countryside and in the cities to everything that tries to restore the old regime, and purely thanks to terror.

To defend the revolutionary terror, various arguments are put forward which the Russian author refutes one by one. We will stop and focus on only one: the allegation that this is the will of the popular masses themselves. First of all, even if it were the case, it still would not be binding for us, but it is in fact false. At the beginning of

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<sup>1</sup> The "NEP," the New Economic Policy admitting private capital again, is an admission of this bankruptcy.

the Russian revolution, from February–March 1917, and also after October, there were acts of popular violence directed against representatives of the old regime: policemen, gendarmes, and officers. But this popular anger was short-lived and, as soon as the people felt their oppressors were well-defeated, they had only contempt or pity for them. If the ruling party had taken advantage of this little resentment in the popular soul to direct the revolution in the way of concord, the events would have taken another turn. But instead, it saw fit to stir up hatred, to set an example by way of reprisals; from 1918 on, terror became an official system with its Cheka, its shootings, its armed expeditions against the peasants, etc.<sup>1</sup> From then on, terror came only from *above*, while the workers more than once showed feelings of humanity (for example when they acted as judges in the People’s Courts). It is therefore slander to blame the Russian people for so much bloodshed.

Up to now we have agreed completely with this Russian author. But there is a weak point in his argumentation: it is impossible for him to find a criterion to differentiate between acceptable and non-acceptable violence. He admits it himself. As long as it is a question of civil war or barricade fighting, violence is justified by the fact that the two armed opponents are fighting as equals. The same is true of the terrorist act against a representative of power: not to mention the fact that revolutionaries only ever resort to this means when pushed to the limit; the very fact that the murderer, in killing, deliberately gives his life means that we do not allow any comparison between him and the executioner. But there are other cases. Steinberg’s faction does not refuse to use power and does not deny governmental violence, while at the same time placing quite strict limits on it. Thus our author accepts that the bourgeois be deprived of political rights, and, if he repudiates in an absolute way the death penalty, he admits that political enemies can be imprisoned or banished. Now, when will political persecution ever stop if we do not immediately address it in principle? And won’t these persecutions, even if they are less ferocious, have the same demoralising effect? To these questions, he does not and cannot give any answer. It is absolutely necessary to find a criterion that will allow us to justify or condemn this or that way of acting.

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<sup>1</sup> Ed: The secret police of the Soviet Union who were primarily responsible for the Red Terror.

<sup>2</sup> Ed: Red Terror (1918-1922), a violent political campaign against perceived counterrevolutionaries but which often

No social transformation has been achieved without struggles; no step forward has been made without sacrifices. Violence has been, in history, a necessary evil; it must be considered *as such*, and no more. What makes it necessary is that the dominant and exploiting classes have always defended their privileges with all the strength that the power of the State puts in their hands. But, once the road is cleared, once the armed domination of the old order of things is thrown down by the insurrection, violence ceases to be a *necessary evil* and becomes the very evil itself. It can exert no creative action; the best social regime, if introduced and maintained by coercion, quickly degenerates into the worst. Once it has resorted to force, it is incapable of doing without it.

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Whether violence is exercised by power in the name of divine right, or of the majority, or of the working class – the result is the same. That’s why we prefer not to ask “*In whose hands lies the weapon?*” but: “*Against whom is it directed?*” If it is against the armed forces, it is a right of self-defence that cannot be denied to anyone; if it is against yesterday’s enemy, now disarmed, or against the adversary of ideas, we refuse to recognise any right to violence.

A dangerous confusion is often made here. We are told: “The revolution is not made without bloodshed; it is impossible to prevent acts of revenge by the oppressed. By condemning the ‘Red Terror,’ you condemn the revolution itself.”<sup>2</sup> We must not play on words. One thing is *popular* anger, another thing is government terror. A government, no matter how scrupulously it wants to represent the people, will never represent anything but their interests, or perhaps their opinions, but never their feelings, their despair, and their anger. Whatever price we attach to human life we excuse the popular mass even in its so-called “excesses” — because of the accumulation of past sufferings. But there is no excuse for the cold, thoughtful, and calculated violence of a government.

Hence this criterion, in our opinion, is the only acceptable one: violence can only be justified at the hands of the weak, the oppressed, from those who have before them a superior armed force; in the wake of victory, it is entirely without excuse and fatal to the cause it defends.

involved the crushing of peasant rebellions, such as the uprising at Kronstadt.

# The Truth about Kronstadt:

## An Attempt at a Libertarian Soviet Revolution

### M. Isidine (Marie Goldsmith)

“La Vérité sur Cronstadt : Une Tentative de Révolution soviétique libertaire”, *Les Temps Nouveaux: Revue internationale des Idées Communistes*, April-May 1921<sup>1</sup>

We have, at last, reliable information that allows us to understand the true character of the Kronstadt movement, which the Bolshevik government has just crushed. And we can affirm without hesitation that this movement has been odiously slandered: it has absolutely nothing in common with the Whites,<sup>2</sup> generals, monarchists, agents of the Entente, etc. Nor is it the work of poor dupes, unwittingly directed by reactionaries. It is an absolutely spontaneous movement, without preparation, without plot, without external guides; it was led only by the sailors of Kronstadt themselves who knew very well what they wanted. And what they wanted was not at all a counter-revolution, but a change that would allow, on the contrary, the Russian revolution to go forward towards a true equality and a true administration of the people by themselves. They defended the Soviets – a creation of the Russian working masses – against a government that had, in fact, suppressed them by substituting a dictatorship of officials.

What may have confused the Western public and given credence to the slander was the joy shown at the news of the Kronstadt uprising by the bourgeois press and the Russian reactionary parties. But is it not always so? If a revolutionary attempt were made in France, wouldn't



the royalists try to fish in troubled waters? And during the war, did not the German government encourage the Irish movement and even the Russian Bolshevik movement in its interests? Did this prevent these movements from being clearly revolutionary? “Reactionary manoeuvres” are always an easy argument to fall into. When we remember that, in 1893–94, Jaurès had already seen the role of the Jesuits in the anarchist attacks and spoke of certain red silk shirts that were found in the homes of all those searched and that had certainly been distributed to them by the Church!<sup>3</sup>

In Kronstadt, moreover, the reactionaries, if they were more intelligent, should have seen from the beginning that they had nothing to hope for.

In their *Izvestia* (organ of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee), the revolting sailors energetically rejected the slander and clearly declared that they had absolutely nothing in common with the White generals.<sup>4</sup>

By their acts, moreover, the insurgents of Kronstadt showed their complete independence. Lacking everything, they refused to be supplied by the Entente.<sup>5</sup> They also refused to receive the 500,000 francs of financial aid that Russian financiers from Paris were planning to send them. From Paris, too, a hundred Russian officers of the reactionary armies sent their

<sup>1</sup> Translated by Christopher Coquard; Edited by Søren Hough & Christopher Coquard.

<sup>2</sup> Ed: The Whites were one of many factions during the Russian Civil War. They were a politically heterogeneous group, ranging from social democrats to republicans to nationalists, united primarily by their anti-Bolshevik position.

<sup>3</sup> Ed: We do not know for certain what Goldsmith is alluding to here. This may refer to the anarchist bombings that took place in 1893 and which led to severe repression of anarchist newspapers, such as *Père Peinard*. After right-wing opponents attacked the Socialist Party for being in league with the anarchists, socialist politician Jean Jaurès made an impassioned speech in the Chamber of Deputies denying the connection and pointing the finger back at the capitalist and clerical classes for causing the unrest.

<sup>4</sup> Ed: *Izvestia of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee of sailors, soldiers and workers of the town of Kronstadt* (1921) was the official newspaper of the Kronstadt rebels. Not to be confused with *Izvestia* (1917-present), which was the official state newspaper of the Soviet Union which operated at the behest of the central government.

<sup>5</sup> Ed: The Entente refers to the Allies during World War I (France, Britain, and Russia).

offers of services by radio to Kronstadt; they were told, "Stay where you are, we don't need you."

Besides, all those who know the Russian revolutionary movement knew, from the beginning, what to expect. The Kronstadt sailors were already in the forefront of the movement during the first revolution, that of 1906; their role was also important in the revolution of 1917. They showed absolute intransigence and extreme fighting spirit; under Kerensky's government, they proclaimed the Kronstadt Commune and demanded their autonomy.<sup>1</sup> At that time, the government was reluctant to repress them and an agreement was reached. Trotsky said then, responding to some protests: "Yes, the Kronstadt sailors are anarchists. But when the moment of the decisive struggle for the revolution arrives, those who are now pushing you to repression will prepare the ropes to hang us all, while the Kronstadt sailors will give their lives for our defense." Later, when the Bolsheviks were the spokesmen of the people's demands ("peace, land and all power to the workers' and peasants' soviets"), the Kronstadt sailors contributed more than anyone else to give them the victory. And, during the last years, they were still there to defend Petrograd against the reactionary armies. And then they suddenly became agents of the "Whites"? Kronstadt, a nest of reaction? It is impossible.

Information and documents from there have now come to confirm what we all felt in advance. Let us say a few words about the course of events.

At the end of February, unrest broke out among the workers of Petrograd; it was a question of supplies. There were strikes and, as always, arrests of strikers. Kronstadt, where the discontent against the government was already great, was moved and decided to support the comrades of Petrograd. The movement immediately took on a political character. The powers of the Kronstadt soviet had long since expired, but the government refused to allow new elections in order to keep the power of the old, Bolshevik soviet. This was only one of the manifestations of the dictatorship of the Communist Party which the Kronstadt sailors had suffered more than once.

A delegation was sent by the sailors to Petrograd to study the situation there and to work out a plan of joint action. On its return, the following agenda was voted on March 1st by an assembly of the crews of ships of the line:

"Having taken note of the report presented by the representatives of the crews in Petrograd to

study the situation in this city, we made the following decisions:

1. Since the present soviets do not express the will of the workers and peasants, the soviets must be immediately established by secret vote with, before the elections, full freedom of propaganda for all the workers and peasants.
2. Freedom of speech and press for workers and peasants, for anarchists and left socialist parties.
3. The freedom of meetings, professional unions, and peasant groups.
4. The meeting, before March 10, 1921, of a conference, without party, of workers, soldiers of the Red Army, and sailors of the city of Petrograd, Kronstadt, and Petrograd region.
5. The release of all political prisoners belonging to different socialist parties, all workers and peasants, soldiers of the Red Army, and sailors arrested for the workers' and peasants' revolts.
6. Election of a Commission to review the trials of prisoners in prisons and concentration camps.
7. The abolition of all "political sections,"<sup>2</sup> because no party can enjoy privileges for the propaganda of its ideas and receive subsidies from the State for this purpose. In their place must be established commissions of instruction and education whose expenses must be borne by the state.
8. The immediate abolition of all "blocking units."<sup>3</sup>
9. Unification of rations for all workers except for unhealthy industries.
10. The suppression of the communist detachments in all the units of the army and of the communist sentinels in the factories and the plants; in case of need, the detachments and the sentinels will be able to be ordered by the companies, and in the factories and plants by the workers.
11. Complete freedom for the peasants to freely use all the land and own the livestock, provided that they do not resort to wage labour.
12. We ask all military units and all fellow students of military schools to join our revolution.

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<sup>1</sup> Ed: Aleksandr Kerensky (1881-1970) was the first prime minister of Russia and led the provisional government from March 1917 to November 1917. He was a moderate socialist whose government was deposed during the October Revolution. Kerensky fled to the United States where he spent the rest of his life.

<sup>2</sup> Organisation belonging exclusively to the "communist party" created to control them within all civil and military institutions.

<sup>3</sup> Military detachments posted at railway stations to prevent the arrival of foodstuffs other than those bought and sold by the State.

13. We demand that all of our resolutions receive wide publicity.
14. That an Office of Mobile Controllers be appointed.
15. The freedom of the home industry, not employing salaried staff.”

Vershinin, sailor of the Sevastopol; 9. Tugin, worker at the electric factory; 10. Romanenko, manager of the repair yards; 11. Orechine, supervisor of the 3rd school of work; 12. Valk, foreman of the sawmill; 13. Pavlov, worker at the ammunition factory; 14. Baikov, head of the rolling stock of the fortress; 15. Kilgaste, pilot.

The same resolution was then proposed to the general assembly of the citizens of Kronstadt, comprising about sixteen thousand people, and adopted unanimously. It became like a “charter” of the movement. On March 2, at a meeting of the delegates of the ships, military units, workshops and workers’ unions of Kronstadt (three hundred people in all) was appointed a “Provisional Revolutionary Committee” in charge of organising the new elections, free this time, to the local Soviet; this Committee published a daily newspaper, the *Izvestia*, and it informs us about the goals and the character of the movement.<sup>1</sup>

The article “Why We Fight” is very characteristic in this regard.

Another article entitled “Stages of the Revolution,” published in the anniversary issue of the 1917 Revolution (March 12), develops this idea that revolutionary Russia went through two successive periods: the one when, during the Provisional Government, it put all its hopes in the Constituent Assembly,<sup>2</sup> and the period of the domination of the communist party.

In an “Appeal to the workers, red soldiers and sailors” published on March 13, they said:

“The communist party seized power by pushing aside the peasants and workers in whose name it acted... A new communist serfdom was born. The peasant became a mere labourer, the worker a salaried employee of the state factory. Intellectual workers were reduced to zero... The time has come to overthrow the commissarocracy. The vigilant sentinel of the revolution, Kronstadt, did not sleep. She had been in the front row in February and October. She was the first to raise the flag of revolt for the third workers’ revolution... The tsarist autocracy fell. The Constituent Assembly has become a thing of the past. The commissarocracy will fall, too. The time has come for real workers’ power, for soviet power.”

“Here in Kronstadt, we have, since March 2, overthrown the cursed yoke of the communists and raised the red flag of the third workers’ revolution.

Red soldiers, sailors, workers, the revolutionary Kronstadt calls on you.

We know that you are being deceived, that you are not being told the truth about what is happening in our country, where we are all ready to give our lives for the sacred work of the emancipation of the worker and the peasant.

They try to convince you that there are white generals and popes among us.

In order to put an end to these lies, we bring to your attention that the Provisional Revolutionary Committee consists of the following fifteen members:

And here is an excerpt from the *Appeal to the World Proletariat*, March 13:

1. Petritchenko, clerk of the ship of the line Petropavlosk; 2. Jacovenko, telephonist of the liaison service of the Kronstadt zone; 3. Ossossov, mechanic of the ship of the line Sevastopol; 4. Arkhipov, chief mechanic; 5. Perepelkin, electrician of Sevastopol; 6. Patrushev, chief electrician of the Petropavlovsk; 7. Kupelov, auxiliary doctor; 8.

“For twelve days, a handful of true heroes, proletarian workers, soldiers of the Red Army and sailors, isolated from the whole world, have taken it upon themselves to endure all the blows of the communist executioners. We will carry to the end the work begun for the liberation of the people oppressed by party fanaticism, or we will die with the cry of ‘Long live the freely elected Soviets!’ Let the proletariat of the whole world know this. Comrades, we need your

<sup>1</sup> Extracts from this newspaper were given by the newspaper *Voila Rosati* (Prague) and the bulletin *Pour la Russie* (Paris).

<sup>2</sup> Ed: The Constituent Assembly was an elected body composed of Socialist Revolutionaries, Bolsheviks, and other parties. After elections were held in November 1917 and the Bolsheviks did not achieve a majority, they dissolved the Assembly on January 11, 1918, and shifted the government to one-party rule. Of note, although Kronstadt revolutionaries and their *Izvestia* were early proponents of the Constituent

Assembly, they ultimately agreed with the Bolsheviks, stating they would only back the Assembly if it were “so composed as to confirm the achievements of the October revolution.” They would go on to provide armed support for the Soviet government following the Assembly’s dissolution (Getzler, Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917–1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy* [United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1983]. 180–183).

moral support; protest against the violence of the communist autocrats...”

A fact worth noting. Everything we have said about the character of the Kronstadt movement is confirmed by the Bolsheviks themselves. A Russian Bolshevik newspaper published in Riga, the *Novy Put*, while propagating the fable of reactionary Kronstadt, imprudently publishes, in its March 19 issue, the following lines:

“The Kronstadt sailors are, as a whole, anarchists. They are not to the right, but, on the contrary, to the left of the communists. In their last radio communication they proclaim: ‘Long live the power of the Soviets!’ Not once have they shouted, ‘Long live the Constituent!’ Why did they rise up against the Soviet government? Because they don’t find it Soviet enough! They proclaim the same slogans, half anarchist, half communist, that the Bolsheviks themselves had launched three and a half years ago, in the aftermath of the October revolution.

In their struggle against the Soviet government, the Kronstadt insurgents speak of their deep

hatred for the ‘bourgeois,’ for everything that is bourgeois. They say: the Soviet government has become ‘gentrified,’ Zinoviev is ‘exhausted.’<sup>1</sup> Here we are dealing with a left-wing rebellion, not a right-wing rebellion.”

The Kronstadt uprising is – at least for the time being – defeated. We do not know what repercussions it will have in Russia, all the while feeling a communion of spirit between it and all those peasant and worker revolts which, during the same period, agitated and still agitate the vast and various corners of Russia. But a certain conclusion emerges for us. Revolutionary Russia is burning the previous stages and setting a new path. It had hardly begun to linger on a purely political emancipation and of the cult of universal suffrage before being immediately confronted with the great social problem. Now, it is the state-centralising tendency of social democratic movements which is collapsing.

The Soviets, as they take shape in the minds of the masses, represent extreme decentralisation and autonomy. There remains the great question, the most difficult, the most serious: that of the organisation of production not by the state, but by the producers.

## Marxist Utopia

**M. Korn (Marie Goldsmith)**

“Марксистская утопия.” *Голос труженника (Golos truzenika: Voice of the Worker)*, September 1925<sup>2</sup>

The realisation of the socialist ideal has moved beyond the sphere of dreams and theoretical propaganda, drawing closer to us and becoming our next vital task. And, if it is important to clarify the question of what the most direct paths to the goal are and what the best way to ensure the victory is, it is still more important to consider what should be done *after* the victory to make the results of the revolution last and, more importantly, to make certain that they entail the growth of the people’s well-being and happiness. In this regard, most socialists (by this term, I mean both state socialists of any orientation and the anarchists) have now settled with proclaiming the slogan of “the dictatorship of the proletariat” expecting that the rest will resolve itself. They believe this slogan to mean that the workers are the ones who

**How then can the dictatorship of an entire class be imagined? In the only way possible: with the class governing by means of its representatives; with rule as such exercised not by the class but by someone speaking on their behalf**

govern social life, that they become the builders of their own lives, that under “the dictatorship of the proletariat” they have no one exploiting their labour and no masters at all. Is this actually so, and what is the real meaning of this old slogan?

The very words “the dictatorship of the proletariat” involve an ambiguity: a dictatorship is always the unlimited power of one or a few people. How then can the dictatorship of an entire class be imagined?

In the only way possible:

with the class governing by means of its representatives; with rule as such exercised not by the class but by someone speaking on their behalf, by someone elected

<sup>1</sup> Ed: Grigory Yevseyevich Zinovyev (1883-1936) was a Russian revolutionary, Bolshevik, and associate of Vladimir Lenin. At the peak of his career, he was a prominent member of the Communist Party, serving as chairman of the Communist International (Comintern) and of the Petrograd

Soviet. Zinovyev worked with Joseph Stalin to prevent Leon Trotsky from taking over once Lenin had died, but was eventually turned on and executed in the Great Purge.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by Alexandra Agranovich; Edited by Søren Hough & Christopher Coquard.



by them or merely by someone believing to be entitled to act on behalf of the workers.

In a word, after the revolution, a new power comes to lead society – the power of the socialist party or of one of its more influential factions, and this power takes on the organisation of the working class’s lives. The part of the proletariat sympathising with the party in power will enjoy political and economic privileges, and the rest will not only be unable to influence the course of things, but will suffer all kinds of restrictions of their freedom and initiative. In this regard, “the dictatorship of the proletariat” is as fictitious as “the people’s power” in the contemporary democratic state. And every critical comment raised against the representative government system, the power of the majority, the parliamentary system, etc. are equally applicable to the so-called proletarian dictatorship. That is why it is so strange seeing attacks against the democratic regimes of Western Europe and North America on the part of those who endow their political ideal with *all* the same drawbacks, and with a few more which the West-European workers have rid themselves of as a result of a long struggle.

But where does this notion of “the dictatorship of the proletariat” come from? This is an old concept and it would be a great mistake to believe that it stems from real life and from the experience of the Russian revolution. It has a purely bookish origin and arises exclusively from Marxist theory as it was proclaimed back in the 1840s.

As it is well-known, Marxism bases its understanding of human history on the idea that all of history is the struggle between different classes which supersede and vie with each other for the governance of society, with supersedence taking place due to technological development and growth of the productive forces of society, and with specific classes inherent to each moment of this development. For instance, when society lives mainly on agriculture and its industry and trade are poorly developed, it is the class of big landowners that rules and oppresses the peasant serf class. Afterward, urban industry develops; then the bourgeois class emerges to exploit the wage worker class. And in every epoch, political power is in the hands of the class which has economic control.

So, at present, the bourgeoisie governs the whole of political life in Europe and America. But now, the proletariat appears to replace the bourgeoisie, and, consequently, political power passes into its hands, and from this point on, the State serves the interests of the new ruling class and protects it. This regime is the dictatorship of the proletariat. An objection may be raised immediately against this theoretical construct:

how can the victory of the proletariat be considered *a change of the ruling class*? Whom will the new class govern, given that the revolution has elevated the most humiliated and exploited class and, therefore, has destroyed any class rule? Marxists have two answers to this: a fundamental and an existential one. The fundamental one is: yes, the classes are eliminated by the victory of the proletariat, and as the State is always the agent of the ruling class, the State eliminates itself. Thus, the future belongs to anarchist society. However, how can this agree with the widespread practice of social democracy, especially, of Russian Bolshevism? Here we come to the other – and the contrary – answer, the existential one. It arises from the Marxist idea of the socialist revolution.

Marxist literature does not abound with descriptions of prospects of the future: their fear of utopias is too great for that. But what we know shows clearly enough that the realisation of socialism is supposed to be spread over a whole historical period. During this period, the classes still exist, and capitalist exploitation exists, too, though, *it is mitigated and reduced in favour of the proletariat*. The government favours the proletariat and makes the situation of the bourgeoisie more and more difficult. Industry becomes more and more nationalised and passes into the State’s hands. This is what Lenin in Russia called “state capitalism,” necessary for the “transitional period.” At the dawn of Marxism, Marx and Engels proposed a number of steps in their *Communist Manifesto* that the State must take during such a period, and fifty years later, Kautsky, in *Social Revolution*, also set forth a plan of measures, such as progressive taxes on big incomes and estates, anti-unemployment measures, nationalisation of large property, etc. — in a word, a program that has nothing to do with socialism and is virtually identical to the contemporary minimum programs of social democratic and even simply radical parties.

“The dictatorship of the proletariat” is the political regime of the “transitional” period when socialism *does not yet exist*; and when it comes into being, Marxists say, it will take a *governmentless*<sup>1</sup> political form. This is extremely pleasant to hear and equally unlikely to happen; moreover, this is utterly impossible if the future is as Marxists are shaping it. They justify despotism of State power by the circumstance that capitalism is not yet completely eliminated, and promise freedom as soon as socialism has no more enemies. But what does that mean? In reality, it is not only the true supporters of capitalism, but all socialists of any dissentient orientation that the ruling party considers to be its enemies. From this point of view, the complete triumph of socialism – say, in Russia – requires sweeping elimination not only of all bourgeois-minded

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, this is still a common idea in Russia. See Stalin’s answers to the questions from students of the Sverdlovsk University.

populations, but of all Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, anarchists, syndicalists, perhaps some opposition inside the Communist Party itself, and all discontented city and village residents. As a result of such an unprecedented purge, the country will appear as a band of government officials with a voiceless intimidated mass underneath. And this very moment will be chosen for the elimination of the State!

First, who will eliminate it? No government has ever given up power other than under pressure: power has always been curbed by revolutions or fear of revolutions. Has it ever happened that a government at the maximum of its political and economic might, a government enjoying such power that not even a despot could dream of (the complete absence of opposition!) would suddenly give it all up voluntarily? This is obviously impossible. Complete freedom right after complete slavery is in general a transition difficult to imagine, but even if we admit the possibility, it requires an uprising, a political revolution. However, Marxist theory does not allow for this: such a revolution, they say, is impossible where there are no classes and, of course, they will not agree that state ownership is nothing more than typical class rule over hired proletarians. In short, the notorious “leap from the realm

of necessity to the realm of freedom” is impossible to imagine; it is nothing other than a decoy, something like paradise and bliss in the afterlife.

In reality, the extension of governmental functions during the so-called transitional period cannot lead to anything except atrophy of any social initiative, and, hence, the longer it lasts, the less likely we are to realise the ideal of free communal life. Why, in everyday life, if a person wishes to walk in a certain direction, they never start by walking the opposite way, but in politics, this seems possible and even natural? It is probably so because we believe the words without reflecting on their real meaning and also because such a vague notion as “a transitional period” relieves lazy human thinking from the necessity of searching for new, unconventional paths.

On the way to our ideal, there of course will be periods which we may call transitional, but first, they must always add something to the extent of equality and freedom achieved by society and must not detract anything; and second, in our activities, we must refer to our final goal rather than those interim periods. The more insistent we are in striving toward *that goal*, the more of our ideas will come to pass and the shorter any possible transitional period will be.

## A Few Words on a Confusing Notion

**M. Isidine (Marie Goldsmith)**

“Quelques mots sur une notion confuse” *Plus Loin*, 15 September 1925<sup>1</sup>

In the innumerable discussions that the Russian revolution has given rise to in socialist and revolutionary circles, the idea of a “transitional period” following victorious revolution constantly recurs; it is perhaps the most abused idea for trying to either justify or deny indefensible actions. It is generally believed that even the most advanced countries are not ready for completely realised socialism (and, *a fortiori*, of anarchist socialism). On this basis, some advocate half-socialist, half-radical measures, or even a “workers’ government” which, as far as socialism is concerned, will only realise the minimum elements of the program; others aim at a dictatorship which will give the revolutionaries absolute power which they will then use to serve the interests of the working class, above all by terrorising the bourgeoisie. The Bolsheviks, in particular (and the anarchists who have allowed themselves to be led by them), say to us: “Do you really believe in the possibility of making anarchist communism reign from now on? The masses are not prepared for it and socialism still has too many enemies; as long as they remain, the State will remain necessary. You must resign yourself to a transitional period of dictatorship.”

As long as we are willing to discuss the matter on this basis and to make our opinion dependent on our assessment – optimistic or pessimistic – of the degree to which the workers are prepared, it will be impossible for us to give a clear solution to the question in accordance with our principles. And this is understandable: the question must be posited in a different way. Whether or not our ideal is attainable “right away” – this can in no way influence our actions. We know that only the historian, through consideration and once the results have been acquired, will one day establish which advances our time was ripe to realise; and as for our contemporaries, they are always mistaken in this respect, each one in relation with their own personal opinions. We do not believe in the existence of predetermined phases of evolution, identical for all peoples. We know that the general stride of humanity leads forward to a better use of the forces of nature and to a better assurance of the liberation of not only the individual, but also of social solidarity. On this path, there may be stops, even setbacks, but never a definitive movement in the opposite direction. And the more that the communion between different peoples solidifies, the more rapidly those who are further along this path will

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by Christopher Coquard; Edited by Søren Hough & Christopher Coquard.

inspire the laggards. And as for the rest – the speed of the movement, its peaceful or violent course, the conquests achieved at this or that moment – all this depends on a number of factors that cannot be predicted. Among these factors, one of the most powerful has always been and will always be the action of individuals and their groups. The ideas that inspire the most energetic action will have the greatest chance of triumphing; life will follow the result of the forces applied.

Consequently, the more we employ our efforts in view of our ideal in all its intransigence, the closer to it we will get.

In discussions where one speaks about a “period of transition,” we are often confused and misunderstand each other, because it is a question of two very different notions. On the one hand, every epoch is a transitional period to a higher stage, because as certain aspirations are accomplished, others arise.

But there always exists certain dominant problems, which preoccupy all people capable of thinking, and other problems, such as those of the future, which are thought of only by an advanced minority. Thus, the socialist problem: the abolition of capitalist exploitation and the organisation of an economic society based on equality is in our time on the verge of immediate realisation; but to base this new society on freedom and to assure the genuine development of its people remains the ideal of only a few: the anarchists. At which moment will this ideal finally take its place as our primary objective, and become essential for the majority? Only the future will tell; however, it is certain that before it is realised as we conceive it, we will go through a series of transitional stages.

But we must also consider other elements under the name of transitional period: it is the moment which immediately follows a revolution, when the old forms are not entirely deconstructed – the enemies, partisans of the past, are still to be feared – and the new order of

things is born in the midst of the struggle and in the most dire of difficulties. And then, if one considers uniquely only this moment, apart from the past and especially the future, one arrives at the conclusion, like the Bolsheviks, to justify all means, even the most dangerous ones, generally borrowed from the old world, and which places the necessity of a dictatorship at the forefront.<sup>1</sup> Or one can propose, as Kautsky and the other social democrats do, a temporary regime where the socialists will be in power, but will postpone the realisation of their socialist program to some indeterminate moment in the future.

Whether it is one or the other of these directions, our way of seeing things is completely different: we refuse to be hypnotised by this idea of transition. That successive progress and partial advancement must precede the total realisation of our ideal is quite possible and even probable, but for these successive stages to be acceptable and desirable to us, they must lead us toward this ideal and not toward something diametrically

opposed. The way toward a society free of all State coercion and founded upon the free association of individuals can only be achieved through social forms where free initiative increases and authority decreases. But if, under the guise of a period of transition toward a free community, we are offered a complete annihilation of all freedom, we reply that this is not a transition, but a step backward. We have not been raised in the tradition of the Hegelian dialectic, which considers as a natural phenomenon the transformation of a thing into its opposite; our thinking is penetrated rather by the principle of evolution, which tells us that each stage of development is not only not opposed to the previous one, but proceeds from it.<sup>2</sup> The anarchist society will never result from a dictatorship; it will only be born from the elements of freedom that have subsisted and flourished in spite of all State-inspired constraints. For a social form to be considered a step forward toward an ideal, it must contain more elements of this ideal and never less; otherwise, it is a retreat and not progress.<sup>3</sup>

notion of dialectical analysis in favour of a forward-marching view of humanity’s progress.

<sup>3</sup> Ed: Goldsmith outlines one of the core principles of anarchist thought: the unity of means and ends. This describes the idea that the tools of liberation must be in harmony with the desired liberated future. For instance, one cannot use top-down authoritarianism to achieve self-determination. This concept is not unique to anarchism; more recently, prison industrial complex (PIC) abolitionists have articulated the perspective that abolition cannot be achieved by enacting

**The way toward a society free of all State coercion and founded upon the free association of individuals can only be achieved through social forms where free initiative increases and authority decreases**

<sup>1</sup> Ed: Articulating this point, Vladimir Lenin argued in *State and Revolution* (1918) that, “The proletariat needs state power, a centralised organisation of force, an organisation of violence, both to crush the resistance of the exploiters and to lead the enormous mass of the population – the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and semi-proletarians – in the work of organising a socialist economy” (Lenin, “State and Revolution,” *Collected Works* 25: 409).

<sup>2</sup> Ed: As an evolutionary biologist, Goldsmith uses the term evolution advisedly. In this case, she uses it to reject the

The Paris Commune, for example, did not set out to create an anarchist society, but anarchists everywhere regarded it highly for its broad federalism. Similarly, during the Russian revolution, anarchists warmly welcomed the institution of the free soviets, as long as they emerged from popular initiative, and not from the official organs, which today offer only a caricature of them; they saw in them a form of political organisation preferable to classical parliamentarianism, which in their minds increased the development of initiative and collective action among the people.

A sympathetic attitude toward everything that brings us closer to our ideal is a self-evident thing; the notion of a “transitional period” can add nothing to it. It only serves to obscure the discussion and to give a pretext to certain groups to “revise” our ideas, which means, essentially, to abandon them in their very essence. In reality, the revolutionary moment is the one which lends itself the least to prudence, to the fear of utopia, of the “unattainable”; on the contrary, it extends the limits of all hopes. Let us not therefore be intimidated by these false historical narratives, to which the whole experience of history gives a firm denial.

## On the Issue of “Revision”

M. Korn (Marie Goldsmith)

“К Вопросу о ‘Пересмотре’” *Дело Трудя (Dielo Trouda: The Cause of Labor)*, November 1925.<sup>1</sup>



*It's only the one admitting to being defeated who is defeated.*  
(Old Proverb)

Lately, we are seeing a revision of our views – a “reassessment of values” – across the board. This is a completely natural, even inevitable, pursuit: our worldview is not a rigid dogma; it must develop and transform as life goes on, and we have to be responsive to its lessons. Besides, the Russian revolution is such an important historical event offering us so much experience that it would be entirely impossible not to derive anything from it and content ourselves instead with a simple repetition of what was said ten years ago.

So, the first question that arises: does the experience of the Russian revolution confirm or refute our main ideas? We are anarchists not (or not only) because we find the anarchist ideal attractive, but because we believe that it is along this path that humanity will be most successful in moving toward free and equal communal life; for us, anarchist society is not something that only exists as an abstract thought, but rather a real social order, a real goal of social activity. That is why the facts of reality are extremely important for us.

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Had the experience of the Russian revolution shown that state-building, centralisation, and dictatorship were successful in putting economic equality into practice, ensured free cultural development to everybody, and allowed everyone to develop their spiritual faculties, we would not have hesitated to admit to our mistake and to extend our hand to statist socialists in order to work together. Similarly, had anarchist activities developed in the course of the Russian revolution to an extent sufficient to offer some experience of positive construction by anarchist methods, those of free agreement and bottom-up organisation, and had that experience shown the inadequacy of these methods, we would have admitted to that and started searching for other methods and programs.

And what about now? We haven't seen either of those outcomes. The anarchists have had no chance to launch their programme, while the statist building methods have gone bankrupt so obviously that nobody can deny it. “War communism” or, as Lenin put it more precisely, “state capitalism,” has had to make every possible concession to the bourgeoisie, since it refused to accept the methods of free socialism.<sup>2</sup>

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reforms which reinforce the legitimacy, funding, and strength of the PIC (Mariame Kaba, “Police ‘Reforms’ You Should Always Oppose”, *Truthout*, December 7, 2014).

<sup>1</sup> Translated by Alexandra Agranovich; Edited by Søren Hough.

<sup>2</sup> Ed: Lenin proclaimed the need for state capitalism as a “step toward socialism” in an address to the Session of the All-

Under these circumstances, the main principles of our worldview not only prove to be far from inconsistent in the face of these events, but draw new strength from them. In the course of our revaluation, or revision, these principles stay out of question, along with everything that is inseparably connected with them, arises from them, and cannot be detached from them. The “revision” may only have a single objective: make *new* conclusions from the events and consecrate *new* phenomena based on these main principles, find answers to *new* questions, and develop, based on the experience, practical *programs* that could not be outlined before. We are closer to real achievements now than we were before, and this imposes on us certain obligations.

However, in our circle, a peculiar attitude has developed. Some comrades dwell on the idea that a revolution is a complicated, difficult, long business requiring sacrifice, associated with war, famine and various disasters. They saw it in the past, foresee it in the future, and make a rather unexpected conclusion: that our programmatic views are inconsistent! As if those views were to blame for everything Russia has suffered! Seemingly, the more complicated the task we face, the stronger we have to adhere to the paths we believe to be right, the more we have to the more we have to grip tighter our arms. Yet some comrades, in view of expected difficulties, begin a “revision” of anarchism that deprives it of any strength to fight these future dangers and brings to nought its historical role.

It’s either one thing or the other: either a person believes that anarchism is on the right path with regard to community building and is more able to fight against our opponents than any other system, or they believe that anarchism is inappropriate for this — but then, what right do they have to call themselves anarchists?

In these discussions, two questions come to the fore above all: that of the classes and that of the transitional period.

What is the anarchist attitude towards class struggle? In this general form, the question gives rise to a lot of misunderstandings, especially due to the reign of Marxist terminology.

On one hand, class struggle is a fact; on the other hand, it is the object of theoretical reflections. As a fact, it is only denied by those who do not see or are not willing to see the opposition of the interests of labor and capital — of the bourgeois and the workers who still see their

masters as their benefactors. No socialist would refuse to acknowledge the fact of class struggle and to consider the struggle necessary. Nor, consequently, is there such an anarchist.

However, if we proceed from this basic notion common to all socialists, it will turn out that not all socialists have the same views of *how* the classes group and *which of them* must logically fight each other. In Russia, the early socialism by Chernyshevsky and the Narodniks fought mainly for the interests of the working peasants against their exploiters — the landowners, the rich peasants, and the State.<sup>1</sup> Later, Russian Social Democrats set their exclusive goal as struggle of the newly formed urban proletariat against the bourgeoisie, shoving the peasants aside and declaring them the petty-bourgeois element — contrary, by the way, to Marx himself who was closer to the Narodniks<sup>2</sup> in this regard. In other countries, some socialists tended to appeal not only to the proletariat but to small owners, as well — peasants, independent craftsmen, etc.; others rejected all except the wage workers. Some considered the working intelligentsia to be a part of the proletariat, others were implacable in designating them as part of the bourgeoisie, etc. In a word, the question of what classes, beside the proletariat, socialism can deal with remains as open as it was before. One does not have to search for far-off examples: it is enough to look at the daily wavering the Bolsheviks show with regard to whom they should draw on.

What is the anarchists’ stance in these disputes? In this regard, there has always been a radical difference between the anarchists and the Marxists. To determine what social classes and categories they fight for, the anarchists bring to the forefront the question of who is oppressed and exploited in the given society. For them, liberation of the working class as a class is *the primary condition of liberation of all of humanity*. For the Marxists, the class they cast their lot with is determined by a purely economic criterion: the class whose share in distribution of the public product is salary, i.e., the proletariat. As for the Marxists supporting this class’s interests, they do so because they are convinced that it is time for the proletariat to replace the bourgeoisie. Marx, however, expresses the idea that the victory of the proletariat marks elimination of all classes, but practical Marxists tend to side-line this consideration, and thus reduce liberation of all of humanity to the replacement of one class with another.

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Russia C.E.C. on April 29, 1918 (Lenin, “Session of the All-Russia C.E.C.”, *Collected Works* 27: 279-313).

<sup>1</sup> Ed: Nikolay Chernyshevsky (1828 – 1889) was one of the founding theorists of Narodism, a form of Russian socialism focused on liberating peasants from exploiter classes in favor of communal ownership. Chernyshevsky, as well as fellow theorists like Peter Lavrov, further believed in the role of the intelligentsia to help lead the peasants toward these ends.

(Pipes, Richard. “Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry.” *Slavic Review* 23, no. 3 (1964): 441–58). Of note, Marie Goldsmith’s parents Isidor and Sophie were both Narodniks and were close with Lavrov.

<sup>2</sup> With regard to Marx’s attitude to this controversial issue, see the extremely interesting article by [Vladimir Mikhailovich] Zenzinov, “The Lost Scroll” in *Sovremennye Zapiski (Contemporary Writings)*, No. 24.

Those of our comrades who are going to blur our *universal humanist* points of view over as if to the benefit of the *revolution* are deeply mistaken. If there were a contradiction between the interests of the *revolution* and the interests of *humanity*, it would mean that the revolution is not necessary or is harmful – and we would not be revolutionaries. Similarly, if there were a contradiction between the interests of the proletariat and those of *the human person* (like the one that exists between the interests of the individual and the interests of the capitalist class), we would not protect the working class. But the point is that, in every historical epoch, the oppressed part of society aspiring for liberation was at the same time the proponent of *universal humanist* ideals since it was forging a path to a better future and increasing the amount of freedom in humanity. That is why, if anybody ever represents a method of struggle harmful to the individual as a method of serving the interest of the proletariat, we will be able to say without any hesitation that that is a mistake, and the tactic suggested will be in the first place harmful to the proletariat itself. This is what happened to the “dictatorship of the proletariat.” A group of people acting on behalf of the working class legitimises economic inequality, creates a politically privileged social stratum, suppresses public initiative, eliminates the liberty of thought, etc. The working class is thus deprived of any initiative, any possibility of using the fruits of their revolution for their social and spiritual development, and of building their lives on their own.

And what is the class question on “the next day” after the revolution? On the face of it, why even speak of this: if the classes have not yet been eliminated, then the revolution has not achieved its goal and “the next day” has not yet come. If it has come, then all of the concerns of this variety consist of preventing social categories from swapping places: that is, yesterday’s paupers becoming people of wealth and vice versa. *Such* a result is easy to obtain but is worth nothing. It may satisfy the feeling of vengeance for a minute, but it has no social importance. On the contrary, it is necessary to take every effort possible to ensure that the victorious day of the revolution puts an end to all privileged categories. In the basic matter of material needs, there is a means to do so: *our communism*. Some comrades today have a somewhat dismissive attitude towards our principle of “to each according to their needs” as if it implies untold

riches. No, no matter how poor society is, it has always an opportunity to distribute fairly what little it has, and “fairly” means *according to need*. Any other measure of distribution will give rise to acute conflicts and enmity, and will further complicate the already difficult situation by undermining social solidarity *necessary* in difficult moments. New wine shouldn’t be poured into old skins, and new life must be based on a new principle. Only then will strength and enthusiasm arise that will be able to overcome the obstacles; mechanical violence will yield nothing.

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Next to economic privileges stand political privileges. The anarchists, by their very nature, are “politicians,” as they place the question of the State at the same level with that of economic reorganisation. And the question of the State is not about class: the State is associated with one or another class so far as it protects that class’s interests; but it may protect the interests and privileges of a category rather than of a class (such as the interests of the nobility in an estates system and those of the clergy in a theocratic one), of a nation, even of a single ruling party. And struggle against the State as an institution *in general*, not against its specific form, is not done to protect any particular class. Similarly, the sum total of moral principles included in

anarchism does not fit into the class framework.

Anarchism is a class doctrine since class struggle is present in all forms of socialism, but anarchism adds many other things, just as valuable, to it.

In this political sphere, at a revolutionary moment, the anarchists mainly have to fight the formation of the *non-class* State power, the power of a social democratic (no matter Bolshevik or Menshevik) *party* looking forward to reigning over society where everybody is the State’s hired servant and all are equal in their dependence on the State. The anarchists rebel against this dictatorship not in the name of class interests, but in the name of trampled human rights. Yet, their goal is certainly not limited to opposition against that State power: their task is defending and implementing a transfer of all functions of the State into the hands of voluntary public organisations. The State will only be eliminated when it is stripped of all its socially useful functions. It will vanish as unnecessary, since nobody will defend it if it is left only with its policing function.

The first step along this path is syndicalism, i.e., transferring all industrial enterprises, transport, etc. into

the hands of trade unions and factory committees. Then, the organisation of distribution follows; it is carried out by cooperatives or other appropriate associations; the housing problem is resolved by committees elected by all the residents of a city, etc. In a word, a number of organisations must be created, each having its highly specialised powers and none exceeding the scope of its powers. The anarchists will have to work on the creation of such organisations in every sphere of life, and later, to work in these organisations, as far as their individual skills and capabilities permit. Sure, that is non-partisan work, but one should bear in mind that the success of that work, the ability of the new free institutions to rise to the occasion, will decide the fate of the revolution itself.

And a few more words on the issue of power. Some Russian comrades display a viewpoint, a completely new one in our movement, which consists in a calm, moreover, conciliatory, attitude towards constraint of freedom: freedom of thought, opinion, associations. In

## [II] Transitional Period (Ending)

“К Вопросу о Пересмотре — Переходный Период (Окончание)”, *Дело Труда (Dielo Trouda: The Cause of Labor)*, January 1926<sup>1</sup>

There is a lot of talk now about the impossibility of implementing the anarchist system soon after the revolution, about the necessity of a long transitional period, etc., and they insist that should we acknowledge this point everything will run like clockwork; and should we not — catastrophe will follow. What, in fact, is there to be afraid of? One can say for sure that the anarchist ideal in its entirety will not be implemented anywhere on the next day after the *first attempt* at a social revolution, that certain experience and a certain period of revolutionary social development will be required for that. The anarchists have never denied this; they have always had in mind a transitional period when speaking of the necessity to leave some transformations to life itself and not to resort — once the soil has already been cleared of the old oppression — to forcible imposition of new practices.

Let's take, for instance, the question of small peasant property. The anarchists will never agree that a peasant who works the land by themselves, *by their own labour*, be stripped of this land, and the land be forcibly transferred to collective ownership; they will expect that communalisation of the land will take place as a result of the comprehensive development of the spirit of free association and owing to the example offered by prosperous agricultural communities. There will certainly be a lot of vestiges of the past in the new society, in economic relations, in organisational forms, and in the phenomena of spiritual life. Thus, for example, trade unions and public associations

the name of struggle against the counter-revolution, they start admitting that “we,” too, should use the force of power to defeat the enemy. And it is not the case of an armed enemy one must defend from, it's an enemy fighting in the sphere of ideas: by means of speech, publications, party activities. The main truth of anarchism — that force may only be used against an oppressive force, that thought and peaceful activity may not be subject to any constraint — is discarded for the sake of “practicability,” as if Russian experience has not shown a thousand times what brilliant results these notorious practicability-based methods bring! It's not worth elaborating on this, or we shall be reiterating fundamental truths that every anarchist can find in any booklet taken from our literature.

The second question taking an important place in our “revision” is that of the so-called “transitional” period. Much is associated with this issue, even more than the notion itself implies. We will now look into it.

(cooperatives, labour exchanges and the like) took over the management of production and product distribution; but some of them stand for application of the communist principle “to each according to their needs,” while others do not dare to part with the old form of labour remuneration and product payment. Of course, the anarchists will fight these vestiges of the past, but not by means of force. They will use ideology, mainly, the force of *examples*: their main task will be showing that an activity based on *their* principles will not stand to lose and, moreover, will be more successful. That is why in the circumstances of that new life where *free organisational experiments are possible* the kind of work we now call “cultural” fuses and conflates with revolutionary work, and every cultural conquest achieved by anarchist methods will directly serve the implementation of the anarchist social system.

The same applies to the other spheres: in organisation of the school, where the anarchists must proclaim the complete freedom to teach and of institute any kind of school; in the sphere of religion where any violence would be extremely contrary to the anarchist spirit; and where the only choice is to leave everything to the natural influence of the environment and to the achievements of intellectual development.

However, accepting the relics of the past as a necessary evil and fighting them ideologically is one thing; elevating these relics to the status of an inevitable developmental stage and regarding this stage as the

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by Alexandra Agranovich; Edited by Søren Hough.

immediate objective of our activity – while temporarily setting aside “impracticable” slogans – is quite another. In doing so, we forget one more point: the best way to make our slogans truly impracticable is to stop proclaiming them.

The existence of vestiges of the past is a necessary evil, but *it is not the thing* one must adapt to when developing programmes, because any such adaptation will make this evil stronger and more viable. No prediction to the effect of *at what moment* and *which part of* our ideal will come true will change anything in this state of affairs. At *every* moment, our programme may only be based on *our* communism and *our* political ideal, and afterward life itself will show us what is impracticable at any given moment. Some allow for a longer period before the anarchist system is implemented in full, others predict a shorter time. Regardless, if some are more optimistic and believe the implementation is possible immediately after the revolution, why fight this? Where is the danger? In excessive faith? That has never seemed to harm any cause. That faith moves mountains is not merely a phrase, same as the notion that at a critical moment (war, revolution) the victory is often a result of something that an impassive mind sees as impossible. It seems we are afraid of enthusiasts, but aren't they the ones who drive progress – not only in society, but in science, in art – everywhere?

There is a lot of talk of the Bolsheviks' pragmatism, skills, organisation, etc.; they may well have all these faculties, but it is not owing to them that they left the social mark on the Russian revolution only a few of the other active parties aspired to leave in 1917. Soon after the October Revolution, Lenin happened to say that he did not expect practical implementation of law-making, that it was enough for him to throw slogans at the masses in that manner. And he was absolutely right: the decrees could not have any practical value (life is not built like that), but the principles proclaimed stuck in the mind and paved a way for the future. There are two techniques in social activities: setting a broad goal in anticipation that the broader it is, the greater part of what is expected will come true, and setting goals pre-acknowledged as attainable, to secure the achievement.

The anarchists have initially chosen the first way and discarded all the minimum programmes. The second way was that of social democratic parties. Now it has been suggested that we set a goal of “more practicable” requirements of a transitional period; we recollect early disputes about minimum programmes. But if back then, in peacetime, we did not consider those programmes desirable or appropriate, why should we renounce our birth right now, after the revolution? The transitional period was underway yesterday, still is today; what it will become tomorrow depends on what people of conviction, people who believe in their cause, make of it.

These are the main points of the revision taking place among our ranks. They do not add anything new to anarchism, do not develop or improve it in light of new facts, but, on the contrary, take a lot away. In short, anarchism is deprived of its *soul*. Indeed, by denying the principle “to each according to their needs,” one knocks its economic foundation, its communism, out of it, reduces it *exclusively* to class struggle, strips it of its philosophical worldview limiting it to purely economic struggle, and blurs its anti-statist nature; by suggesting that we fight for a transitional period, one takes away maximalism and introduces a minimum programme. And then – shall I mention the shame every one of us must feel at the thought that sometimes we may justify political repression of our

ideological opponents, even if they are downright counter-revolutionaries? And all that is done for the sake of practicability, feasibility, for the good of the revolution! What does such “anarchism” amount to? A word void of any meaning – or, rather, a word with quite a foreign meaning.

Sure, everyone has the right to acknowledge their mistakes, to change their opinion; but, on finding one's earlier ideas inconsistent, it would be better and more logical not to smuggle into one's earlier worldview something that doesn't fit with it at all. Some new movement may emerge among our Russian comrades, but judging by what is shaping up, that movement will not be anarchism. And, without any doubt, it will be accompanied by the old, sound, and consistent anarchism that will, as before, attract minds and spirit.

**...the anarchist ideal in its entirety will not be implemented anywhere on the next day after the first attempt at a social revolution, that certain experience and a certain period of revolutionary social development will be required for that. The anarchists have never denied this...**



# Max Baginski

**([Born 1864:] Died 24 November 1943)**

**Rudolf Rucker**

*Die Freie Gesellschaft (The Free Society)*, Vol. 2, No. 23, 1951<sup>1</sup>

I

On 24 November 1943, Max Baginski died at Bellevue Hospital in New York at the age of 79. With his passing, the world lost one of the most outstanding members of the old guard of libertarian socialism, a magnificent character of rare intellectual talent and matchless mental power.

Baginski was born in Bartenstein in 1864, a small East Prussian town near Königsberg. Max's father had a shoemaking business, but, as a free-spirited and rebellious man who had earned a reputation as a "black sheep" within his ultra-conservative community, he often struggled to make a living. In his youth, he had enthusiastically participated in the revolution of 1848, and, after the victory of the reaction, was sent to prison for a few months – an experience which, needless to say, did not teach him a "better attitude."

As a child in his father's house, Max eagerly read *Die freien Glocken* ("The Free Bells"), which was then edited by the freethinker Dr. August Specht in Germany. The little cobbler's workshop also received the *Berliner Freie Presse* ("Berlin Free Press"), which at that time was published by Johann Most in the capital; even then Most's folksy, humorous language made an impression on the young boy.

When Max finished school and was about to become his father's apprentice, he was supposed to receive a churchly blessing from the pastor of the little town, as was common practice in Germany.



**Max Baginski and his companion Emilie Schumm**

For this service the man of God demanded two and a half thalers, which the father denied him. When the pastor finally agreed to offer the blessing for free, the father told him: "No, that doesn't work! Without money, the whole thing won't bring any blessings, and my son will end up in hell!" Thus, Max had to begin his apprenticeship without the blessing of the church – a fact which bothered him not at all. When Max travelled to Berlin in 1882, he was already a convinced Socialist. It was a difficult time in Germany back then. Bismarck's exceptional law against the Socialists weighed on the working class like an incubus, hampering any free

movement. Socialist newspapers could only be smuggled in from abroad, and public demonstrations on behalf of Socialism were out of the question. Only small trade unions were suffered a beggar's existence every now and again, although even these eventually fell prey to the law. Together with his older brother Richard, Max threw himself heart and soul into the underground movement; he soon became one of the most active comrades of the "inner circle," which, heroically taking on every sacrifice, led the battle against the reaction. Because Socialists were not allowed to hold their own conventions in those days, they often appeared *en masse* at the conventions of the officially-sanctioned political parties, where they were obliged to talk sparingly lest every meeting be broken up by the police. Baginski, who had

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/5qfvww>

distinguished himself as one of the finest speakers of the movement, made frequent and masterful use of this right of hospitality to develop ideas that could not be expressed openly in Socialist meetings.

In this inner circle of the underground movement, a core group known as the *Opposition der Jungen* (“Youthful Opposition”) formed which opposed the centralistic tendencies of the old social-democratic party leaders and tried to direct the movement towards more radical measures.

Together with Karl Wildberger, Wilhelm Werner, Bruno Wille and others, Baginski emerged as one of the spiritual leaders of a young movement which even then was foretelling the fate of German social democracy – a fate which would so cruelly come to pass many years later with Hitler’s rise to power. When the exceptional law against the Socialists was struck down in 1890 and the Youthful Opposition went public, Baginski participated in the momentous debates which took place in Berlin between the “old” and the “young” and confronted the party elders more forcefully than anyone.

Even before the two factions decisively split at the political convention in Erfurt (1891), the party leaders put Baginski in charge of the editorial office of the newspaper *Der Proletarier aus dem Eulengebirge* (“The Owl Mountain Proletariat”), which served as a propaganda outlet among the Silesian weaver population, then among the poorest of the German workers. That the steering committee placed the defiant Baginski in such a position can only be explained by their desire to get him out of Berlin so that he could no longer sway the Youthful Opposition.

In his new sphere of influence, Baginski was untiring. His brilliant talent as a speaker, and, above all, his humble, unaffected character earned him scores of followers among the starving weavers of the Owl Mountains. He soon knew every village, every far-flung corner in this region of ever-increasing hunger and misery. When the young Gerhard Hauptmann began to collect the impressions which he later portrayed in his famous drama “The Weavers,” he found in Baginski an excellent guide. Together they visited the most deeply impoverished sites, which Hauptmann would later describe in such shocking detail in his books.

The police certainly did not approve of Baginski’s role as agitator among the weavers. Several lawsuits were filed against his newspaper. In one of

the offending articles, he had very vividly described and criticised the pedagogical methods used in elementary schools in his East Prussian *Heimat* (home region). When Baginski was compelled to defend himself on this score, the prosecutor explained: “The defendant is a living refutation of his own statements. He himself has only attended elementary school, yet his writing is of superb quality. His grim humour has been influenced by Heinrich Heine, his reckless criticism by Ludwig Börne.” Max Baginski, the simple shoemaker, spoke a masterful German that was the envy of many intellectuals. He certainly he did not learn it at school; rather, it was an outgrowth of his personal character. The prosecutor came to these conclusions because he had visited Baginski frequently in prison and had hour-long conversations with him. He had also sent all the classic German literature from his private library to Max’s cell. Such an episode is rare to behold in Germany!

Around this time Baginski was sentenced to two and a half years in prison for a number of press-related offenses. While he was imprisoned in Schweidnitz, the Erfurt congress expelled Werner and Wildberger, the leaders of the “Young Ones,” from the party. At the same time, some of the old party leaders tried to keep Baginski in the party – on this account August Bebel and Ignaz Auer visited him in prison, and Auer even promised him a prominent position in the party after his release. But Baginski was not a man who violated his friends’ trust. He stood in solidarity with Werner and Wildberger and turned his back on the very party for which he had laboured so strenuously under the Anti-Socialist Law. Baginski was a pure, sincere man. For him, freedom of thought was more important than anything else. His whole being rebelled against every inflexible party dogma which his conscience could not condone. Later on he was one of the first from the Youthful Opposition movement to embrace Kropotkin’s libertarian ideas.

During his imprisonment he was brought close to death by a cancer of the head and neck which had been improperly treated by the prison. When the Socialist press made his case public, he was granted interim release after two years of imprisonment. He went to Zurich, where he gradually recovered and participated actively in the circles of the Youthful Opposition movement, represented by such august and abiding representatives as Gustav Landauer, Franz Blei,

Hans Müller, Alfred Sanftleben, Fritz Köster, and others. All of them have since died except for my faithful friend Alfred Sanftleben, who is still alive at almost 80 years-old in Los Angeles. He has been afflicted by a severe illness for years, but he is mentally unbroken and remains devoted to the ideal of freedom, as in the tender dreams of his youth.

## II

In 1893, Baginski decided to emigrate to the U.S., where his brother Richard had already moved. On his trip from Zurich, he came to Paris, where he stayed for four weeks. I met him there in person for the first time, and we remained friends for life. (Perhaps he should have stayed in Europe, as he was one of those rare wanderers in the garden of life who fares poorly away from home. But these are questions of fate that can scarcely be answered.) In New York, Baginski joined the circle of Johann Most and his friends, and he became a diligent employee of Most's newspaper *Freiheit* ("Freedom") for which he wrote several of his best essays. He remained closely connected with Most until he (Most) died. More than anyone else he understood the character of this outcast man, probably because Most, who was driven out of Germany by the Anti-Socialist Law, is only remembered in this country as a lost knight fighting in a forlorn position – a fact which became tragically apparent to him, especially later in his life.

In the fall of 1894, Baginski assumed the position of chief editor of the *Arbeiter Zeitung* ("Workers' Newspaper") in Chicago. The newspaper had gone through many changes in its history. It was founded in the first half of the 80s by August Spies, but after his tragic death on November 11, 1887, the newspaper was taken over by the Social Democrats. After that time the newspaper underwent various changes and strayed from its original meaning. It was only in 1894, when the editors followed the recommendation of Most to

entrust Baginski with editorial responsibilities, that the newspaper experienced a resurgence. The Chicago *Arbeiter Zeitung* was a daily newspaper which also published two weeklies called the *Fackel* ("The Torch") and the *Vorboten* ("The Herald"). Baginski's co-editors were Hippolyte Havel and Rudolf Grossmann; with them, he made the newspaper one of the best German language workers' papers in the U.S. Baginski stayed in his position for more than seven years, until the editors decided one day to sell space in the newspaper's advertisement section for bourgeois election propaganda. Baginski certainly could not countenance such a decision, and he withdrew from

his editorial role. The *Arbeiter Zeitung* was once again led by the Social Democrats but ceased publication not long thereafter.

In 1896 Baginski tried to publish his own weekly paper, *Die Sturmglöcke* ("The Alarm Bell"), of which only a few issues were published. After the passing of Johann Most in March 1906, Baginski was invited to edit *Freiheit* and he did so exemplarily. Within one year, however, the old, ever-fighting newspaper folded after a romantic and stormy existence. The German libertarian movement in the U.S., which used to be the strongest in the country, became defunct. The old generation gradually died off, and its young offspring

ventured off in different directions – the inevitable fate of all migrations.

After this, Baginski was active for years in the circle of Emma Goldman and her friends, and he published many superb essays in *Mother Earth* until this period also ended with the deportation of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. He then wrote for our papers in Germany and for the New York *Volkszeitung* ("Peoples' Newspaper"), edited by Ludwig Lore, but when this paper started to become involved in Communist activities and harshly attacked Emma Goldman, Baginski quit there as well, as he was a loyal friend who never made any compromises in these matters.

**Max Baginski was one of the most outstanding human beings I have met in my life, a man with extraordinary intellectual capacities and inner strength of character, always patient and mild in his judgment of others, and without any personal ambition.**

Max Baginski was one of the most outstanding human beings I have met in my life, a man with extraordinary intellectual capacities and inner strength of character, always patient and mild in his judgment of others, and without any personal ambition. He had all the talents of a good writer: abundant creativity, a good sense of humour, and a crystal-clear writing style which made his work truly enjoyable. He himself, however, never considered his natural gifts to be special. At his house, you could never find a single line he had written. When I chided him about this once, a silent smile rushed over his elegant face, and he replied: “Whenever I write something, I release pressure from my soul, but then it has lost its meaning for me.”

His fantastic prelude to the works of Robert Reitzel – which he composed in three big volumes in Detroit in 1913, as was commissioned by the Reitzel Society, and of which only five-hundred copies were printed – is a brilliant proof of his literary talent. When reading these texts, one feels in each line the strong connection of Baginski’s soul with the unforgettable editor of *Der Arme Teufel* (“The Poor Devil”). Over almost four decades, Baginski’s literary creations could be found all over the German language libertarian newspapers and magazines. I tried to collect his best pieces and publish a book, but the brown barbarism that swept over Germany destroyed this plan, as it did so many others.

Although Max Baginski lived in the U.S. for fifty years, he could never get used to the conditions in this country. This was one reason why he became

so lonely later in his life, judging other peoples’ gross stupidities only in silence. He was always driven by an inner longing towards something that he could never reach. When he returned to us in Germany after WWI for a few months, he felt like an alien there as well, as though he had no home anywhere and could only find repose in the inner world he created for himself. I received several interesting letters from him that clearly reflected the fate of this great man. Unfortunately, the Nazi cannibals destroyed these as well.

During his final years of life, my poor friend suffered from a chronic weakness of memory that only worsened with time. He lived with his loyal partner Emilie, the sister of our deceased friend George Schumm, in the friendly little town Towanda in Pennsylvania, and each time I visited him, it broke my heart to see how swiftly his inner decay progressed. It was a hard fate, twice as hard for his courageous female companion of so many years, who knew well that no amount of dutiful effort on her part could change a thing. In July 1943, the old folks moved in with their daughter, who lived in New York. There, Max became very ill after a couple of weeks, so they had to bring him to the hospital where death finally closed his tired eyes.

Max Baginski was one of the last of the old school, a man who thought, battled, and suffered greatly while always remaining patient. If he were able to read this obituary from his old friend, he surely would have said: “Why make such a fuss over something so small? We come and go, but it’s not worth the effort to prattle over it.”

## Without Government

### Max Baginski

*Mother Earth*, March 1906

The gist of the anarchistic idea is this, that there are qualities present in man, which permit the possibilities of social life, organisation, and co-operative work without the application of force. Such qualities are solidarity, common action, and love of justice. Today they are either crippled or made ineffective through the influence of compulsion; they can hardly be fully unfolded in a society in which groups, classes, and individuals are placed in hostile, irreconcilable opposition to one another. In human nature today such traits are fostered and developed which separate instead of combining, call forth hatred instead of a common feeling, destroy the humane instead of building it up. The cultivation of these traits could not be so successful

if it did not find the best nourishment in the foundations and institutions of the present social order.

On close inspection of these institutions, which are based upon the power of the State that maintains them, mankind shows itself as a huge menagerie, in which the captive beasts seek to tear the morsels from each other’s greedy jaws. The sharpest teeth, the strongest claws and paws vanquish the weaker competitors. Malice and underhand dealing are victorious over frankness and confidence. The struggle for the means of existence and for the maintenance of achieved power fill the entire space of the menagerie with an infernal noise. Among the methods which are used to secure this organised

bestiality the most prominent ones are the hangman, the judge with his mechanical: "In the name of the king," or his more hypocritical: "In the name of the people I pass sentence"; the soldier with his training for murder, and the priest with his: "Authority comes from God."

The exteriors of prisons, armouries, and churches show that they are institutions in which the body and soul are subdued. He whose thoughts reach beyond this philosophy of the menagerie sees in them the strongest expression of the view, that it is not possible to make life worth living the more with the help of reason, love, justice, solidarity. The family and school take care to prepare man for these institutions. They deliver him up to the state, so to speak, blindfolded and with fettered limbs. Force, force. It echoes through all history. The first law which subjected man to man was based upon force. The private right of the individual to land was built up by force; force took way the claims upon homesteads from the majority and made them unsettled and transitory. It was force that spoke to mankind thus: "Come to me, humble yourself before me, serve me, bring the treasures and riches of the earth under MY roof. You are destined by Providence to always be in want. You shall be allowed just enough to maintain strength with which to enrich me infinitely by your exertions and to load me down with superfluity and luxury."

What maintains the material and intellectual slavery of the masses and the insanity of the autocracy of the few? Force. Workingmen produce in the factories and workshops the most varied things for the use of man. What is it that drives them to yield up these products for speculation's sake to those who produce nothing, and to content themselves with only a fractional part of the values which they produce? It is force.

What is it that makes the brain-worker just as dependent in the intellectual realm as the artisan in the material world? Force. The artist and the writer being compelled to gain a livelihood dare not dream of giving the best of their individuality. No, they must scan the market in order to find out what is demanded just then. Not any different than the dealer in clothes -who must study the style of the season before he places 'his merchandise before the public. Thus art and literature sink to the level of bad taste and speculation. The artistic

individuality shrinks before the calculating reckoner. Not that which moves the artist or the writer most receives expression; the vacillating demands of mediocrity of every-day people must be satisfied. The artist becomes the helper of the dealer and the average men, who trot along in the tracks of dull habit.

The State Socialists love to assert that at present we live in the age of individualism; the truth, however, is that individuality was never valued at so low a rate as today. Individual thinking and feeling are incumbrances and not recommendations on the paths of life. Wherever they are found on the market they meet with the word "adaptation." Adapt yourself to the demands of the reigning social powers, act the obedient servant before them, and if you produce something be sure that it does not run against the grain of your "superiors," or say adieu to success, reputation and recompense. Amuse the people, be their clown, give them platitudes about which they can laugh, prejudices which they hold as righteousness and falsehoods which they hold as truths. Paint the whole, crown it with regard for good manners, for society does not like to hear the truth about itself. Praise the men in power as fathers of the people, have the devourers of the commonwealth parade along as benefactors of mankind.

**trade unions are a necessity for the workingmen, a bulwark against which the most unbearable demands of the class of possessors rebound; but a complete freeing of labour... can be brought about only through the abolition of wage work and the right of private ownership**

Of course, the force which humbles humanity in this manner is far from openly declaring itself as force. It is masked, and in the course of time it has learned to step forward with the least possible noise. That diminishes the danger of being recognised.

The modern republic is a good example. In it tyranny is veiled so correctly, that there are really great numbers of people who are deceived by this masquerade and who maintain that what they perceive is a true face with honest eyes.

No czar, no king. But right in line with these are the landowners, the merchants, manufacturers, landlords, monopolists. They all are in possession, which is as strong a guarantee for the continuance of their power, as a castle surrounded by thick walls. Whoever possesses can rob him who possesses nothing of his independence. If I am dependent for a living on work, for which I need contrivances and machines, which I myself cannot procure, because I am without means, I must sacrifice my independence to him who possesses

these contrivances and machines. You may work here, he will tell me, but only under the condition that you will deliver up the products of your labour to me, that I may trade with and make profit on them.

The one without possessions has no choice. He may appeal to the declaration of human rights; he may point to his political rights, the equality before the law, before God and the archangels--if he wants to eat, drink, dress and have a home he must choose such work as the conditions of the industrial mercantile or agricultural plants impose upon him.

Through organised opposition the workingmen can somewhat improve this condition; by the help of trade unions they can regulate the hours of work and hinder the reduction of wages to a level too low for mere living. The trade unions are a necessity for the workingmen, a bulwark against which the most unbearable demands of the class of possessors rebound; but a complete freeing of labour -- be it of an intellectual or of a physical nature--can be brought about only through the abolition of wage work and the right of private ownership of land and the sources of maintenance and nourishment of mankind. There are heart-rendering cries over the blasphemous opinion that property is not as holy a thing as its possessors would like to make it. They declare that possessions must not be less protected than human life, for they are necessary foundations of society. The case is represented as though everybody were highly interested in the maintenance of the right of private property, whereas conditions are such that non-possession is the normal condition of most people.

Because few possess everything, therefore the many possess nothing. So far as possession can be considered as an oppressive measure in the hands of a few, it is a monopoly. Set in a paradox it would read: The abolition of property will free the people from homelessness and non-possession. In fact, this will happen when the earth with its treasures shall cease to be an object of trade for usurers; when it shall vouchsafe to all a home and a livelihood. Then not only the bent bodies will straighten; the intellect free itself as might the bound Prometheus rid himself of his fetters and leave the rock to which he is chained, but we shall look back on the institutions of force, the state, the hangman, et al, as ghosts of an anxious fantasy.

In free unions the trades will organise themselves and will produce the means of livelihood. Things will not be produced for profit's sake, but for the sake of need. The profit-grabber has grown superfluous just as his patron, the state, which at present serves by means of its taxes and revenues, his anti-humanitarian purposes and hinders the reasonable consumption of goods. From the governing mania the foundation will be withdrawn; for those strata in society will be lacking which therefore had grown rich and fat by monopolising the earth and its production. They alone needed legislatures to make

laws against the disinherited. They needed courts of justice to condemn; they needed the police to carry out practically the terrible social injustice, the cause of which lay in their existence and manner of living. And now the political corruptionists are lacking who served the above-mentioned classes as helpers, and therefore had to be supported as smaller drones.

What a pleasant surprise! We see now that the production and distribution of means of livelihood are a much simpler matter without government than with government. And people now realise that the governments never promoted their welfare, but rather made it impossible, since with the help of force they only allowed the right of possession to the minority.

Life is really worth living now. It ceases to be an endless, mad drudgery, a repugnant struggle for a mere existence.

Truth and beauty are enthroned upon the necessity of procuring the means of existence in a co-operative organised manner. The social motives which today make man ambitious, hypocritical, stealthy, are ineffective. One need not sell his individuality for a mess of pottage, as Esau sold his primogeniture.

At last the individuality of man has struck a solid social foundation on which it can prosper. The individual originality in man is valued; it fructifies art, literature, science, which now, in so far as they are dependent upon the state and ownership--which is far-reaching--must take the direction of prescribed models that are acknowledged, and must not be directed against the continuance of the leisure classes.

Love will be free. Love's favour is a free granting, a giving and taking without speculation. No prostitution; for the economic and social power of one person over another exists no longer, and with the falling off of external oppression many an internal serfdom of feeling will be done away with, which often is only the reflex of hard external compulsion. Then the longing of large hearts may take tangible shape. Utopias are arrows aimed into the future, harbingers of a new reality.

Rabelais, in his description of life in the "Thelemite Abbey," wrote:

"All their life was spent not in laws, statutes, or rules, but according to their own free will and pleasure. They rose out of their beds when they thought good; they did eat, drink, labour, sleep, when they had a mind to it, and were disposed for it. None did awake them, none did offer to constrain them to eat, drink, nor do any other thing. In all their rule and strictest tie of their order, there was but this one clause to be observed: 'Do What Thou Wilt.'

"Because men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spur that prompteth

them unto virtuous actions, and withdraws them from vice, which is called honour. Those same men, when by base subjection and constraint they are brought under and kept down, turn aside from that noble disposition, by which they formerly were inclined to virtue, to shake off that bond of servitude, wherein they are so tyrannously enslaved; for it is agreeable to the nature of man to long after things forbidden, and to desire what is denied us. By this liberty they entered into a very laudable emulation, to do all of them what they saw did please one. If any of the gallants or ladies should say, 'Let us drink,' they would all drink. If any one of them said, 'Let us play,' they all played. If one said, 'Let us go a walking into the fields,' they went all. If it were to go a hawking, or a hunting, the ladies mounted upon dainty well-paced nags, seated in a stately palfrey saddle, carried on

their lovely fists either a sparrowhawk, or a laneret, or a marlin, and the young gallants carried the other kinds of hawks. So nobly were they taught, that there was neither he nor she amongst them, but could read, write, sing, play upon several musical instruments, speak five or six. several languages, and compose in them all very quaintly, both in verse and prose. Never were seen so valiant knights, so noble and worthy, so dexterous and skilful both on foot and horseback, more brisk and lively, more nimble and quick, or better handling all manner of weapons, than were there. Never were seen ladies so proper and handsome, so miniard and dainty, less forward, or more ready with their hand, and with their needle, in every honest and free action belonging to that sex, than were there."

# Aims and Tactics of the Trade-Union Movement

**Max Baginski**

*Mother Earth*, June and July 1906

Trade unionism represents to the working man the most natural form of association with his fellow-brother. This medium became a necessity for him when he was confronted by modern industrialism and the power of capitalism. It dawned on him that the individual producer had not a shadow of a chance with the owner of the means of production, who, together with the economic power, enjoyed the protection of the State with its various weapons of warfare and coercion. In the face of such a giant master all the appeals of the workingman to the love of justice and common humanity went up into smoke.

The beginning of modern industry found the producer in abject slavery and without the understanding of an organised form of resistance. Exploitation reigned supreme, ever seeking to sap the last drop of strength of its victims. No mercy for the common man, nor any consideration shown for his life, his health, growth and development. Capitalism's only aim was the accumulation of profits, of wealth and power, and to this moloch everything else was ruthlessly sacrificed.

This spirit of accumulation did not admit of the right of the masses to think, feel, or demand; it merely considered them a class of coolies, specially created, as it were, for their masters' use.

This notion is still in vogue today, and if the conditions of the workers at this moment are somewhat better, somewhat more endurable, it is not thanks to the milk of human kindness of the money power. Whatsoever the

workingmen have achieved in the way of better human conditions, – a higher standard of living, or a partial recognition of their rights, – they have wrenched from their enemies through a hard and bitter struggle that required great endurance, tremendous courage and many sacrifices.

The tendency to treat the people as a herd of sheep the purpose of which is to serve as food for parasites is still very strong; but this tendency no longer goes unchallenged; it is being met with tremendous opposition; increased social knowledge and revolutionary ideas have taught the workingmen to unite their efforts against those who have been comfortably seated on their backs for centuries past.

The first unskilled attempt on the part of the people to gain a clear conception of their position brought out blind hatred against the technical methods of exploitation instead of hatred against the latter.

In England, for instance, the workingmen considered machinery their deadly foe, to be gotten rid of by all means. The simple axiom that machinery, factories, mines, land, together with every other means of production, if only in the hands of the entire community, would serve for the comfort and happiness of all, instead of being a curse, was a book of seven seals for the people in those days. And even at this late hour this simple truth is entertained by a comparative few, though more than one decade of socialistic and anarchistic enlightenment has passed.

The first trade-unionistic attempts have met with the same ferocious persecution that Anarchism is being met with today. Even as today capital avails itself of the strongest weapons of government in its attack upon labour. The authorities were not slow in passing laws against trade unionism and every effort for organisation was at that time considered high treason, organisers and all those who participated in strikes were considered aides and abettors of crime and conspiracy, punishable with long years of imprisonment and, in many cases, even with death.

At the behest of Money, the State sent human blood hounds on the trail of the man who in any way was suspected in participating in the trade-union movement.

The most villainous and brutal methods were employed to counteract the growth and success of labour organisations. The powers that be recognised the great force that is contained in organised labour as the means of the regeneration of society much quicker than the working men themselves. They felt this force hanging like a Damocles sword over their heads, which danger made them dread the future, and nothing was left undone to nip this force in the bud.

The fundamental principle of trade unionism is of a revolutionary character and, as such, it never was and never can be a mere palliative for the adjustment of Labour to Capital. Hence, it must aim at the social and economic reconstruction of society.

Many labour leaders in this country, who consider their duty performed when they sit themselves at the table of wealth and authority, trying to bring about peace and harmony between Capital and Labour, might greatly profit by the history of trade-unionism and the various economic struggles it has fought.

Only ignorance can account for the birth of such superficial stuff on the labour question as the book of John Mitchell that has been launched upon the market through loud and vulgar advertisement. Nothing could have disproved the fitness of Mr. Mitchell for a labour leader so drastically as this book.

As already stated, the violent attempt to kill trade unionism or its organisations have proven futile. The swelling tide of the labour movement could not be stopped. The social and economic problem brought to light by modern industry demanded a hearing, produced various theories and an extensive literature on the subject – a literature that spoke with a tongue of fire of

the awful existence of the oppressed millions, their trials, their tribulations, the uncertainty, the dangers surrounding them; it spoke of the terrible results of their conditions, of the lives crippled, of the hopes marred; a literature that demanded to know why it is that those who toil are condemned to want and poverty, while those who never produced were living in affluence and extravagance.

Well-meaning people have even attempted to prove that Capital and Labour are twins, and that in order to maintain their common interests they ought to live in harmony; or, that if Sister Labour had a grievance against its big brother it ought to be settled in a calm and peaceful way. Meanwhile the dear sister was

fleeced and bled by Brother Capital, and every time the abused and slaved and outraged creature would turn to her brother for justice the dear fellow would whip the rebellious child into submission.

Along with the forcible subjection of organised labour, the minds of the people were confused and blurred by the sugar-coated promises of politicians who assured them that the trade unions ought to be organised by the law, and that all labour quarrels ought to be settled by political and legal means. Indeed, legislatures even discussed a few labour-

protective laws that either never saw the light of day, or, if really enacted, were set aside or overridden by the possessing class as an obstacle to profit-making.

Every government, no matter what political basis it rests upon, acts in unison with wealth, and therefore it never passed any legislation in behalf of the producing element of the country that would seriously benefit the great bulk of the people or in any way aim at any change of wage-slaving or economic subjugation.

Every step of improvement the workingmen have made is due solely to their own economic efforts and not to any legal or political aid ever given them, and through their own endeavours only can ever come the reconstruction of the economic and social conditions of society. Just as little as the workingmen can expect from legislative methods can they gain from trade-unionistic efforts that attempt to better economic conditions along the basic lines of the present industrial system.

The cardinal fault of the trade-union movement of this country lies in the fact that its hopes and ideals rest upon the present social status; these ideals ever rotate in the same circle and, therefore, cannot bear intellectual

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and material fruit. Condemned to pasture in the lean meadows of capitalistic economy, trade-unionism drags on a miserable existence, satisfied with the crumbs that fall from the heavily laden tables of their lordly masters.

True social science has amply proved the futility of a reconciliation between the two opposing forces; the existence of the one force representing possession, wealth and power inevitably has a paralysing effect upon its opposing force – Labour.

Trade-unionistic tactics of today unfortunately still travel the path marked out for Labour by the powers that be, while the majority of the labour leaders waste the time paid for by their organisations in listening to or discussing with capitalists sweet nothings in the form of arbitration or reconciliation, and are apparently unaware of the fundamental difference between the body they represent and the powers they bow to. And thus it happens that labour organisations are being brutally attacked, that the militia and soldiers are maiming their brothers in the various strike regions while the leaders are being dined and wined. The American Federation of Labour is lobbying in Washington, begging for legal protection, and in return venal justice sends Winchester rifles and drunken militiamen into the disturbed labour districts. Recently the American Federation of Labour made an alleged radical step in deciding to put up labour candidates for Congress – an old and threadbare political move – thereby sacrificing whatever honest men and clear heads they may have in their ranks. Such tactics are not worth a single drop of sweat of the workingmen, since they are not only contradictory to the basic principles of trade unionism, but even useless and impractical.

Pity for and indignation against the workers fill one's soul at the spectacle of the ridiculous strike methods so often employed and that as often frustrate the possible success of every large labour war. Or is it not laughable, if it were not so deadly serious, that the producers publicly discuss for months in advance where and when they might strike, and therewith give the enemy a chance to prepare his means of combat. For months the papers of the money power bring long interviews with labour leaders, giving detailed descriptions of the ways and means of the proposed strikes, or the results of negotiations with this or that mine magnate. The more often these negotiations are reported, the more glory to the so-called leaders, for the more often their names appear in the papers; the more "reasonable" the utterances of these gentlemen (which means that they are neither fish nor flesh, neither warm nor cold), the surer they grow of the sympathy of the most reactionary element in the country or of an invitation to the White House to join the Chief Magistrate at dinner. Labour leaders of such calibre fail to consider that every strike is a labour event upon the success or failure of which thousands of lives depend; rather do they see in it an opportunity to push their own insignificant personalities

into prominence. Instead of leading their organised hosts to victory, they disclose their superficiality in their zeal not to injure their reputation for "respectability."

The workingmen? Be it victory or defeat, they must take up the reins of every strike themselves; as it is, they play the dupes of the shrewd attorneys on both sides, unaware of the price the trickery and cunning of these men cost them.

As I said before, the unions negotiate strikes for days and weeks and months beforehand, even allowing their men to work overtime in order to produce all the commodities to continue business while the strike is going on.

The printers, for instance, worked late into the night on magazines that were being got ready four months in advance, and the miners who discussed the strike so long until every remnant of enthusiasm was gone.

What wonder, then, that strikes fail? As long as the employer is in a position to say, "Strike if you will; I do not need you; I can fill my orders; I know that hunger will drive you back into the mine and factory, I can wait," there is no hope for the success of the strike.

Such have been the results of the legal trade union methods.

The history of the labour struggle of this country shows an incident that warrants the hope for an energetic, revolutionary trade union agitation. That is the eight-hour movement of 1886 which culminated in the death of five labour leaders. That movement contained the true element of the proletarian and revolutionary spirit, the lack of which makes organised labour of today a ball in the hands of selfish aspirants, know-nothings and politicians.

That which specifically characterised the event of 1886 as a revolutionary factor was the fact that the eight-hour workday could never be accomplished through lobbying with politicians, but through the direct and economic weapon, the general strike.

The desire to demonstrate the efficacy of this weapon gave birth to the idea of celebrating the first of May as an appropriate day for Labour's festival. On that day the workingmen were to give the first practical demonstration of the power of the general strike as an at least one-day protest against oppression and tyranny, and which day were gradually to become the means for the final overthrow of economic and social dependence.

One may suggest that the tragedy of the 11<sup>th</sup> of November of 1887 has stamped the general strike as a futile method, but this is not true. The battle of liberation cannot be put a stop to by the brutality and rascality of the ruling powers. The vicious anger and the wild hatred that strangled our brothers in Chicago are the safest guarantee that their activity struck a potentially fatal blow to government and capital.

Neither Mr. Mitchell nor Mr. Gompers run the risk of dying upon the gallows of sacred capitalistic Justitia; her ladyship is not at all as blind as some suppose her to be; on the contrary, she has a very keen eye for all that may prove beneficial or dangerous to the society that draws its subsistence from the lives' blood of its people. She has quite made up her mind that the gentle men in the ranks of Labour today lead the people about in a circle and never will urge them out into the open, towards liberation.

## II

As I endeavoured to prove in my article on this subject in the June number of "MOTHER EARTH," trades-unionism stood, from its very beginning, in extreme opposition to the existing political and economical powers.

The latter not only suspected every labour organisation of aiming to improve the condition of its members within the limits of the wage-system, but they also looked upon the trades-union as the deadly enemy of wage-slavery, – and they were right. Every labour organisation of sincere character must needs wage war upon the existing economic conditions, since the continuation of the same is synonymous with the exploitation and enslavement of labour.

The enmity of these antagonistic forces is so deeply rooted that the very organisations which were created for the purpose of stemming the tide of revolutionary ideas, sooner or later, became influenced by the latter. In France and Germany the Church organised labour unions to counteract the growth of Socialism and Anarchism. But these "yellow" organisations, as they were called, soon grew beyond the control of the clergy. They rapidly developed out of Christian prayer societies into proletarian fighting organisations. When confronted, during strikes and lockouts, with the necessity of either following the lead of the priests or joining forces with their brothers, their Christian foundation began to totter; they realised that their sympathies in the great economic struggle were not with the most benighted institution of all ages, the Church.

The clergy, too, learned a valuable lesson. They were like hens hatching duck eggs. When the young ones took to water, they realised, to their horror, that they had hatched not their own kind. The Church had hoped

that Christian methods might drill the workingmen into servility under the banner of capitalism, but the spirit of discontent and revolt soon proved more powerful than the hope for the Hereafter. Much as economists may regret it, the workingman cannot continue to be a mere tool, a "hand"; the industrial and social pressure that rests so heavily upon him forces him to use his reason, to see and judge things for himself. A close examination of existing conditions will convince the working men that their liberation will never be effected in a society which treats the producer as a stepchild, as an inferior being

The wealth that labour creates is labour's strongest fetters. Enslaved, robbed of its independence and liberty, deprived of all that makes life beautiful and joyous, its sole function is to accumulate riches for the masters.

**Much as economists may regret it, the workingman cannot continue to be a mere tool, a "hand"; the industrial and social pressure that rests so heavily upon him forces him to use his reason, to see and judge things for himself.**

Woe to the tool if it awakes to consciousness, if it attempts to show a sign of own life! The entire machinery of government is brought to bear against it. Every attempt to secure better pay or shorter hours the law considers criminal. The same brutality that was employed to crush the slave uprising of ancient times is manifested today to crush strikes, to destroy them in the bud. Various labour massacres, as at Homestead, Hazelton and at numerous other labour centres, are based on the notion that the workingman has no right to shape his own life, to decide for himself, or to manifest his desires in any manner whatever. The force that compels hundreds and thousands to continue their life of hell is by

no means less severe, less cutting than the whip or cat-o'-nine-tails which was used to lash the slaves into submission. It is the force of hunger, of poverty.

Whenever poverty raises a threatening hand, government intervenes in favour of capital. It becomes the servant of the latter, the active enemy of labour. As if its only function were the subjection of the people to the arbitrary will of Mammon or to crush every murmur of discontent and to drown the faintest indication of rebellion in a bath of human blood.

Not that clear-headed men had not always insisted that the mission of the State is the destruction of human life, but they were always met with the assurance that it is the abuse of Government which is responsible for its crimes. "The mission of the State, however, is to bring about a just settlement between the contending elements in society and to see that justice and fair play be given to all."

A close study of the general history of Government disproves this assertion a thousandfold. Indeed, if one would take the trouble to make an examination of the various laws of the country, he would behold a chain of tremendous dimensions, every link of which was forged in the interest of the few, against the many. After all, law is but the legal form of conspiracy on the part of the possessing class against the non-possessing, and the State is the right arm, the brutal fist of that conspiracy.

To what extent Government exerts its powers for the protection of the money-bags has been illustrated by Governor Gooding, of Idaho. He recently issued a proclamation to the bankers of Idaho and Colorado, calling upon them to raise a fund of \$25,000 to aid the prosecution of Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone. Just let us have enough money and there will not be the slightest difficulty of sending these obnoxious labour leaders to the gallows. Is not this confession sufficiently frank? Do we need a more candid avowal as to the venal character of our courts? We are greatly indebted to Governor Gooding for his brutal frankness; he has torn the mask of Justice and honesty from the face of Authority, and has revealed the monster in all its damning nakedness cold, hard and shameless, ready to sell out to the highest bidder (or, ready to be prostituted for a respectable price).

In view of all this, what can the workingman expect from the State (government)? Nothing but treachery and deception; nothing but the cruellest injustice and inhuman brutality in its attitude toward labour and labour troubles.

The new conception of Right, which is not based upon the so-called equality before God, but which aims at social and economic equality on earth, is still to be conquered. It will not come down to us from heaven, nor need oppressed humanity hope to receive this right from Kings or Presidents, or from authority of any kind. The human race must become its own liberator; it must fight the good fight; and in that struggle for liberty one of the great factors will be a revolutionary trades union movement, with uncompromising, revolutionary tactics. Such a movement must express the revolutionary spirit of the masses along economic lines; and eventually this revolutionary trades-union movement will become the arena where will be fought the battle for a new order of society – a society based upon the free expression of life in its deepest, richest form.

The work of the trades-union movement must, therefore, consist in the preparation of its members for that battle; it must cultivate in them strength, clear-headed

ness and energy. No one disputes the utility and necessity of wrestling as much as possible for higher pay and shorter hours; but that should be considered in the light of merely preparatory exercises, as training for the final event, the Social Revolution and the overthrow of wage-slavery.

This aim, needless to mention, necessitates a radical change of present-day trades-union tactics. It were absurd to expect that those who stand for the continuation of the capitalistic and governmental regime should by some miracle assist in the overthrow of that regime. It is, therefore, neither logical nor consistent to hope for any real results through legislative means; nor can the workingman achieve anything by the way of arbitration with his masters. On the other hand, organised labour will find the most effective weapon in the method of Direct Action. Nothing wounds Capitalism so deeply as the discontinuation of work. So long as the working

men are willing to negotiate and arbitrate; so long as they tolerate their leaders to be dined and wined, just so long Capitalism need have no fear. But when the toiler awakens to the realisation that direct action will bring him closer to his own kind, will develop the spirit of solidarity, and at the same time give a fatal blow to the system of exploitation and robbery, he will have gained a weapon that nothing can equal in efficacy. In that case the workingman would no longer be in the stupid

position of a client who submits to be fleeced by his lawyer because he knows naught of the tricks and machinations of the law. Once they should learn the methods of war, they would no longer be depended on the chance and whims of jurisprudence, but on their own fighting ability. A revolutionary trades-union could never attack Capitalism upon legal grounds, realising that the law has ever been in illicit relation with mammon.

These attacks must, therefore, be grounded in the solidarity which unites and strengthens those that stand for a common cause, a noble ideal-only this can equip man for a great struggle.

Though the very basis of trades-unionism is solidarity, it has never yet been thoroughly understood nor practised. True, the unions help their sister in distress; material aid is given in times of strikes, in time of storm. But this giving has always borne an artificial, forced, obligatory character, and consequently it produced only artificial results. The various unions,

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though affiliated, often possessed but little mutual understanding or sympathy. As a result, strikes could not-nor did they-bring about radical results; the enemy triumphed and labour succumbed to his whip.

The thing most sadly needed in the labour movement of this country is a proper understanding of the importance and value of work. The powers that be have recognised that long ago. No wonder they dread the possibility of Direct Action – the general strike. They know that, should Labour cease to produce, the entire structure of our society would crumble to ashes.

In Europe the workingmen have accomplished not only external improvements through the widespread practice of Direct Action and the General Strike, but they have also achieved moral victories since they were able to prove that organised labour can bring every function in society to a standstill. When the General Strike was inaugurated in Barcelona, crippling the entire life of the city, the authorities quickly conceded the most important demands of the strikers. This and similar tests have proven how quickly all values of capitalistic economy turn into waste paper. The most daring speculator on the Stock Exchange loses heart when he sees the moving spirit of bonds and stocks disappear. Indeed, the entire humbug of so-called values ceases to exist, as soon as the sole, real value, the blood and nerves of the human system, stop their activity – labour.

The Russian revolutionary movement, for instance, has become a perilous menace to Russian autocracy; it has made the Russian Tzar tremble more violently since the workingmen and the peasants have awakened to the consciousness of their economic power than has been the case during the last fifty years. The numerous strikes, the peasant revolts and the labour uprisings are fated to bring about the downfall of the barbaric Russian regime far quicker than all the efforts of the liberals can ever accomplish.

Witte was one of the first Russians to realise how far-reaching labour and its influence can be. No wonder he always hastened to assure the Russian creditors, whenever he went begging for a new loan, that the industrial conditions were in perfect order.

Labour supports society. If society is unwilling to assign to labour its proper place, the people have the right to withdraw their support and use their best efforts in an endeavour to create a new form of social life, where each man can find his sphere and his highest expression. A correct trades-unionism will prove the most important factor in the fate of our social progress; Direct Action as well as the General Strike must be its methods of combat.

# Stirner: The Ego and His Own

Max Baginski

*Mother Earth*, March 1907

I

Benjamin R. Tucker has published the first English translation of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, written in 1845 by the ingenuous German thinker Kaspar Schmidt under the pseudonym of Max Stirner. The book has been translated by Steven T. Byington, assisted by Emma Heller Schumm and George Schumm. Mr. Tucker, however, informs us in his Preface to the book that “the responsibility for special errors and imperfections” properly rests on his shoulders. He is therefore also responsible for the Introduction by the late Dr. J. L.



**Max Stirner (1806-1856)**

Walker, whose narrow-minded conception of Stirner is suggestive of Individualistic idolatry.

Stirner said: “*Ich hab’ mein’ Sach’ auf Nichts gestellt.*” (“I have set my cause on naught.”)<sup>1</sup> It seems that the Individualist Anarchists have set their cause on Stirner. Already they have sent money to Bayreuth and Berlin, for the purpose of having the customary memorial tables nailed to the places of Stirner’s birth and death.

Like the devout pilgrims wending their way Bayreuthwards, lost in awed admiration of the musical genius of Richard Wagner, so will the Stirner worshipers soon

<sup>1</sup> Erroneously translated by Byington: “All things are nothing to me.”

begin to infest Bayreuth and incidentally cause a raise in the hotel charges. The publishers of Baedeker will do well to take note of this prophecy, that the attention of the traveling mob be called to the Stirner shrines.

A harmless bourgeois cult. Involuntarily I am reminded of another theoretic Individualist Anarchist, P. J. Proudhon, who wrote after the Paris February Revolution: “Willy-nilly, we must now resign ourselves to be Philistines.”

Possibly Dr. J. L. Walker had in mind such resignation when he contemptuously referred in his Introduction to Stirner’s book to the “so-called revolutionary movement” of 1848. We regret that the learned doctor is dead; perhaps we could have successfully demonstrated to him that this revolution – in so far as it was aggressively active – proved of the greatest benefit to at least one country, sweeping away, as it did, most of the remnants of feudalism in Prussia. It were not the revolutionists who compromised the revolution and caused the reaction; the responsibility for the latter rests rather on the champions of passive resistance, á la Tucker and Mackay.

Walker did not scruple to insinuate that Nietzsche had read Stirner and possibly stolen his ideas in order to bedeck himself with them; he had omitted, however, to mention Stirner. Why? That the world might not discover the plagiarism. The disciple Walker proves himself not a little obsessed by the god-like attributes of his master, as he suspiciously exclaims: “Nietzsche cites scores or hundreds of authors. Had he read everything, and not read Stirner?”

Good psychologic reasons stamp this imputation as unworthy of credence.

Nietzsche is reflected in his works as the veriest fanatic of truthfulness with regard to himself. Sincerity and frankness are his passion – not in the sense of wishing to “justify” himself before others: he would have scorned that, as Stirner would – it is his inner tenderness and purity which imperatively impel him to be truthful with himself. With more justice than any of his literary contemporaries could Nietzsche say of himself: “*Ich wohne in meinem eignen Haus,*”<sup>1</sup> and what reason had he to plagiarise? Was he in need of stolen ideas – he, whose very abundance of ideas proved fatal to him?

Add to this the fact that the further and higher Nietzsche went on his heroic road, the more alone he felt himself. Not alone like the misanthrope, but as one who, overflowing with wealth, would vainly make wonderful gifts, but finds no ears to hear, no hands capable to take.

How terribly he suffered through his mental isolation is evidenced by numerous places in his works. He searched the past and the present for harmonious

accords, for ideas and sentiments congenial to his nature. How ardently he reveres Richard Wagner and how deep his grief to find their ways so far apart! In his latter works Nietzsche became the most uncompromising opponent of Schopenhauer’s philosophy; yet that did not prevent his paying sincere tribute to the thinker Schopenhauer, as when he exclaims:

“Seht ihn euch an –  
Niemandem war er untertan.”<sup>2</sup>

Were Nietzsche acquainted with Stirner’s book, he would have joyfully paid it – we may justly assume – the tribute of appreciative recognition, as he did in the case of Stendhal and Dostoyevsky, in whom he saw kindred spirits. Of the latter Nietzsche says that he had learned more psychology from him than from all the textbooks extant. That surely does not look like studied concealment of his literary sources.

In my estimation there is no great intellectual kinship between Stirner and Nietzsche. True, both are fighting for the liberation of individuality. Both proclaim the right of the individual to unlimited development, as against all “holiness,” all sacrosanct pretensions of self-denial, all Christian and moral Puritanism; yet how different is Nietzsche’s Individualism from that of Stirner!

The Individualism of Stirner is fenced in. On the inside stalks the all-too-abstract I, who is like unto an individual as seen under X-rays. “Don’t disturb my circle!” cries this I to the people outside the fence. It is a somewhat stilted I. Karl Marx parodied Stirner’s *Einzigkeit* by saying that it first saw the light in the narrow little Berlin street, the *Kupfergraben*. That was malicious. In truth, however, it cannot be denied that Stirner’s Individualism is not free from a certain stiffness and rigidity. The Individualism of Nietzsche, on the other hand, is an exulting slogan, a jubilant war-cry; more, it joyfully embraces humanity and the whole world, absorbs them, and, thus enriched, in turn penetrates life with elementary force.

But why contrast these two great personalities? Let us rather repeat with M. Messer – who wrote an essay on Stirner – Goethe’s saying with regard to himself and Schiller: “*Seid froh, dass ihr solche zwei Kerle habt.*”<sup>3</sup>

That the champions of pure-and-simple Individualism can be as captious and petty towards other individualities as the average moralist is proven by the extremely tactless remark in Tucker’s Preface about Stirner’s sweetheart, Marie Daehnhard. Stirner dedicated his book to her; for that he must now be censored by Mackay-Tucker in the following manner:

<sup>1</sup> Literally, “I live in my own house.”

<sup>2</sup> “Observe him – he is mastered by no one.”

<sup>3</sup> “Rejoice that you have two such capital fellows.”

“Mackay’s investigations have brought to light that Marie Daehnardt had nothing whatever in common with Stirner, and so was unworthy of the honor conferred upon her. She was no *Eigene*. I therefore reproduce the dedication merely in the interest of historical accuracy.”

No doubt Tucker is firmly convinced that Individualism and *Einzigkeit* are synonymous with Tuckerism. Fortunately, it’s a mistake.

Max Stirner and Marie Daehnardt surely knew better what they had in common at the time of the dedication than Tucker-Mackay knows now.

But we must not take the matter too seriously. Stirner belongs to those whom even their admirers and literary executors cannot kill off. Mr. Traubel and the *Conservator* have not as yet succeeded in disgusting me with Walt Whitman; neither can the Individualists Anarchists succeed in robbing me of Stirner.

A great fault of the translation is the failure to describe the contemporary intellectual atmosphere of Germany in Stirner’s time. The American reader is left in total ignorance as to the conditions and personalities against which the ideas of Stirner were directed.

This is, moreover, dishonest – undesignedly so, no doubt – with regard to the Communists. Stirner’s controversy was specifically with Wilhelm Weitling – who, by the way, is probably quite unknown to most American readers; it were therefore no more than common honesty to state that the Communism of Weitling bears but a mere external resemblance to modern Communism as expounded, among others, by Kropotkin and Reclus. Modern Communism has ceased to be a mere invention, to be forced upon society; it is rather a *Weltanschauung* founded on biology, psychology and economy.

The English edition of *The Ego and his Own* impresses one with the fact that the translator spared no pains to give an adequate and complete work; unfortunately, he has not quite succeeded. It is a case of too much philology and too little intuitive perception. Stirner himself is partly responsible for this, because in spite of his rebellion against all spooks, he is past master in playing with abstractions.

## II

Stirner’s *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* was a revolutionary deed. It is the rebellion of the individual against those “sacred principles” in the name of which he was ever oppressed and subjected. Stirner exposes, so to say, the metaphysics of tyrannical forces. Luther nailed his ninety-five accusations against Popery to the

door of the Schlosskirche at Wittenberg; Stirner’s declaration of independence of the individual throws down the challenge to ALL things “sacred” – in morals, family and State. He tears off the mask of our “inviolable institutions” and discovers behind them nothing but – spooks. GOD, SPIRIT, IDEAS, TRUTH, HUMANITY, PATRIOTISM – all these are to Stirner mere masks, behind which – as from the holy mountain – issue commands, the Kantian categorical imperatives, all signed to suppress the individuality, to train and drill it and thus to rob it of all initiative, independence and *Eigenheit*. All these things claim to be good in themselves, to be cultivated for their own sake and all exact respect and subjection, all demand admiration, worship and the humiliation of the individual.

Against all this is directed the rebellion of the I with its *Eigenheit* and *Einzigkeit*. It withholds respect and obedience. It shakes from its feet the dust of “eternal truths” and proclaims the emancipation of the individual from the mastery of ideals and ideas; henceforth the free, self-owning Ego must master *them*. He is no more awed by the “good”; neither does he condemn the “bad.” He is sans religion, sans morals, sans State. The conception of Justice, Right, General Good are no more binding upon him; at the most, he uses them for his own ends

To Stirner, the Ego is the centre of the world; wherever it looks, it finds the world its own – to the extent of its power. If this Ego could appropriate the entire world, it would thereby establish its right to it. It would be the universal monopolist. Stirner does not say that he wants his liberty to be limited by the equal liberty of others; on the contrary, he believes that his freedom and *Eigenheit* are bounded only by his power to attain. If Napoleon uses humanity as a football, why don’t they rebel?

The liberty demanded by his democratic and liberal contemporaries was to Stirner as mere alms thrown to a beggar.

J. L. Walker entirely misunderstands the very spirit of Stirner when he states in his Introduction: “In Stirner we have the philosophical foundation for political liberty.” Stirner has nothing but contempt for political liberty. He regards it in the light of a doubtful favour that the powerful grant to the powerless. He, as *Eigener* would scorn to accept political liberty if he could have it for the asking. He scoffs at those who *ask* for human right and *beg* liberty and independence, instead of *taking* what belongs to them by virtue of their power.

It is this very criticism of political liberty that constitutes one of the most ingenuous parts of Stirner's book. This is best proven by the following quotation:<sup>1</sup>

“Political liberty, what are we to understand by that? Perhaps the individual's independence of the State and its laws? No; on the contrary, the individual's *subjection* in the State and to the State laws. But why 'liberty'? Because one is no longer separated from the State by intermediaries, but stands in direct and immediate relation to it; because one is a – citizen, not the subject of another, not even of the king as a person, but only in his quality as 'supreme head of the State.' ...

“Political liberty means that the *polis*, the State, is free; freedom of religion that religion is free, as freedom of conscience signifies that conscience is free; not, therefore, that I am free from the State, from religion, from conscience, or that I am *rid* of them. It does not mean *my* liberty, but the liberty of a power that rules and subjugates me; it means that one of my *despots*, like State, religion, conscience, is free. State, religion, conscience, these despots, make me a slave.”

Stirner is anti-democratic as well as anti-moral. He did not believe that the individual would be freed from his moral fetters by “humanising the deity,” as advocated by Ludwig Feuerbach; that were but to substitute moral despotism for religious. The divine had grown senile and enervated; something more virile was required to further keep man in subjection.

By embodying the “God idea” in man, the moral commands are transformed into his very mental essence, thus enslaving him to his own mind instead of to something external; thus would the former merely external slavery be supplanted by an inner thralldom through his ethical fear of being immoral. We could rebel against a mere external God; the moral, however, becoming synonymous with the human, is thus made ineradicable. Man's dependence and servitude reach in this humanising of the divine their highest triumph – freed from the thralldom of an external force he is now the more intensely the slave of his own “inner moral necessity.”

Every good Christian carries God in his heart; every good moralist and Puritan, his moral gendarme.

The freethinkers have abolished the personal God and then absorbed the ethical microbe, thus inoculating themselves with moral scrofula. They proudly proclaimed their ability to be moral without divine help, never suspecting that it is this very morality that forges the chains of man's subjugation. The rulers would cheerfully ignore the belief in God if convinced that

moral commands would suffice to perpetuate man in his bondage. While the “hell of a sick conscience” is in yourself – in your bones and blood – your slavery is guaranteed.

In this connection Stirner says:

“Where could one look without meeting victims of self-renunciation? There sits a girl opposite me, who perhaps has been making bloody sacrifices to her soul for ten years already. Over the buxom form droops a deathly-tired head, and pale cheeks betray the slow bleeding away of her youth. Poor child, how often the passions may have beaten at your heart, and the rich powers of youth have demanded their right! When your head rolled in the soft pillow, how awakening nature quivered through your limbs, the blood swelled your veins, and fiery fancies poured the gleam of voluptuousness into your eyes! Then appeared the ghost of the soul and its external bliss. You were terrified, your hands folded themselves, your tormented eye turned its look upward, you – prayed. The storms of nature were hushed, a calm glided over the ocean of your appetites. Slowly the weary eyelids sank over the life extinguished under them, the tension crept out unperceived from the rounded limbs, the boisterous waves dried up in the heart, the folded hands themselves rested a powerless weight on the unresisting bosom, one last faint ‘Oh dear!’ moaned itself away, and – *the soul was at rest*. You fell asleep, to awake in the morning to a new combat and a new – prayer. Now the habit of renunciation cools the heat of your desire, and the roses of your youth are growing pale in the chlorosis of your heavenliness. The soul is saved, the body may perish! O Lais, O Ninon! how well you did to scorn this pale virtue! One free grisette against a thousand virgins grown grey in virtue!”

Thus the chains fall one by one from the sovereign I. It rises ever higher above all “sacred commands” which have woven his strait-jacket.

That is the great liberating deed of Stirner.

Abstractly considered, the Ego is now *einzig*; but how about his *Eigentum*?<sup>2</sup> We have now reached the point in Stirner's philosophy where mere abstractions do not suffice.

The resolving of society into *einzig* individuals leads, economically considered, to negation. Stirner's life is itself the best proof of the powerlessness of the individual forced to carry on a solitary battle in opposition to existing conditions.

<sup>1</sup> We quote Byington's version.

<sup>2</sup> Meaning, in this connection, property.

Stirner demolishes all spooks; yet, forced by material need to contract debts which he cannot pay, the power of the “spooks” proves greater than that of his *Eigenheit*: his creditors send him to prison. Stirner himself declares free competition to be a mere gamble, which can only emphasise the artificial superiority of toadies and time-servers over the less proficient. But he is also opposed to Communism which, in his opinion, would make ragamuffins of us all, by depriving the individual of his property.

This objection, however, does not apply to a very large number of individuals, who do not possess property anyhow; they become ragamuffins *because* they are continually compelled to battle for property and existence, thus sacrificing their *Eigenheit* and *Einzigkeit*.

Why were the lives of most of our poets, thinkers, artists and inventors a martyrdom? Because their individualities were so *eigen* and *einzig* that they could not successfully compete in the low struggle for property and existence. In that struggle they had to market their individuality to secure means of livelihood.

What is the cause of our corruption of character and our hypocritical suppression of convictions? It is because the individual does not own himself, and is not permitted to be his true self. He has become a mere market commodity, an instrument for the accumulation of property – for others.

What business has an individual, a Stirnerian, an *Eigener* in a newspaper office, for instance, where intellectual power and ability are prostituted for the enrichment of the publisher and shareholders. Individuality is stretched on the Procrustes of bed of business; in the attempt to secure his livelihood – very often in the most uncongenial manner – he sacrifices his *Eigenheit*, thus suffering the loss of the very thing he prizes most highly and enjoys the best.

If our individuality were to be made the price of breathing, what ado there would be about the violence done to personality! And yet our very right to food, drink and shelter is only too often conditioned upon our loss of individuality. These things are granted to the propertyless millions (and how scantily!) only in exchange for their individuality – they become the mere instruments of industry.

Stirner loftily ignores the fact that property is the enemy of individuality, – that the degree of success in the competitive struggle is proportionate to the measure in which we disown and turn traitors to our individuality. We may possibly except only those who are rich by inheritance; such persons can, to a certain degree, live in their own way. But that by no means expresses the power, the *Eigenheit* of the heir’s individuality. The

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**And yet our very right to food, drink and shelter is only too often conditioned upon our loss of individuality. These things are granted to the propertyless millions (and how scantily!) only in exchange for their individuality – they become the mere instruments of industry.... the individual should not be forced to humiliate and lower himself for the sake of property and subsistence. Communism thus creates a basis for the liberty and *Eigenheit* of the individual. I am a Communist *because* I am an Individualist.**

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privilege of inheriting may, indeed, belong to the veriest numskull full of prejudice and spooks, as well as to the *Eigener*. This leads to petty bourgeois and parvenu Individualism which narrows rather than broadens the horizon of the *Eigener*.

Modern Communists are more individualistic than Stirner. To them, not merely religion, morality, family and State are spooks, but property also is no more than a spook, in whose name the individual is enslaved – and how enslaved! The individuality is nowadays held in far stronger bondage by property, than by the combined power of State, religion and morality.

Modern Communists do not say that the individual should do this or that in the name of Society. They say: “The liberty and *Eigenheit* of the individual demand that economic conditions – production and distribution of the means of existence – should be organised thus and thus for *his* sake.” Hence follows that organisation in the Communistic sense is not synonymous with automatic obedience or despotism. The prime condition is that the individual should not be forced to humiliate and lower himself for the sake of property and subsistence. Communism thus creates a basis for the liberty and *Eigenheit* of the individual. I am a Communist *because* I am an Individualist.

Fully as heartily the Communists concur with Stirner when he puts the word *take* in place of *demand* – that leads to the dissolution of property, to expropriation.

Individualism and Communism go hand in hand.



# The Anarchist International

Max Baginski

*Mother Earth*, November 1907

The old International awakens diverse feelings. It was no doubt a powerful attempt to call into life the idea of the revolutionary proletariat in solidaric and international relationship. Unfortunately, however, it served as a centre of intrigue and gossip.

Karl Marx was essentially centralistic. Possibly he imagined that himself, Engels and their immediate friends embodied the only true conception as to the lines that Socialism and the movement of the proletariat should follow. The faith in his own infallibility inevitably resulted in Marx becoming autocratic and authoritarian.

Michael Bakunin was temperamentally unfitted for dogmatic and orthodox ideas. He hated the zigzag path of diplomacy with its intrigues and speculations. Revolution to Bakunin did not mean a scientific doctrine, nor was it a cold, automatic result of evolution, to assert itself without the efforts and assistance of men. Rather did he see in Revolution the direct result of the conscious emotions and aspirations of those who suffer most under the yoke of our social crimes and errors.

The Marxian slogan was to seize the governmental machinery through the ballot. Bakunin, on the other hand, waged war on all government, including that of workingmen, perceiving in any governmental and political regime the very source of oppression and tyranny.

The present syndicalist movement, consisting of direct action, the General Strike, etc., originated with Bakunin, and was fought tooth and nail by the Marxian clique. Thus, centralised authority – as conceived by Marx – and anti-authoritarian federalism – as embodied by Bakunin – were doomed to clash and war with each other.

The weapons employed by Marx and his disciples in this contest were full of poison and venom. But it is not the object of this article to discuss them, nor the mass of insinuation and malicious slander circulated against Bakunin.

The object I have in view is to acquaint the readers of *Mother Earth* with the nature and purpose of the Anarchist International, formed at the Amsterdam Congress. The new International will continue to wave

the flag which Bakunin was prevented from doing by its old namesake.

The main *raison d'être* of the International Bureau at London is to gather Anarchist groups and federations now scattered all over the world and to bring them into harmonious and solidaric relations with each other.

The desire to combine our forces grew out of the lack of concerted action among the comrades of various countries, as well as the comrades of different nationalities. We know so little of each other; we carry on a singlehanded, desperate battle with the powers that be – a battle which would prove much more effective and less trying were we united.

**As Anarchists, we  
cannot remain mere  
preachers and  
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foundation that is to  
support the future**

We may remain perfectly indifferent to the sensational gust of the capitalist press that Anarchist organisations are synonymous with blood-curdling conspiracies. But we cannot afford to have the minds of the workers poisoned by these misrepresentations.

The Anarchists, more than any other set of thinkers, have ever emphasised the dangers of sectarianism, yet many of us have failed to apply our ideas to the

everyday life, and to enter the broad, wide field of the economic struggle. As Anarchists, we cannot remain mere preachers and prophets; we must be practical builders of the foundation that is to support the future. It is a lamentable fact that so few comrades are actively engaged in the trade union movement, yet is there anyone so eminently equipped to participate in the daily economic struggle between capital and labour than the well-informed Anarchist? He knows that the proletariat furnishes the source of revolt against the present social conditions. It therefore behoves him to direct that source into such channels which will pave the way for a new social arrangement.

I do not contend that the International Bureau will represent the force that is to reconstruct the labour movement; what I do insist upon is that the Bureau can become instrumental in bringing about a more thorough understanding between Anarchists and the organised labour forces.

To achieve this the Bureau needs the individual and collective co-operation of all comrades.

A circular letter just received from the secretary of the Bureau puts several questions to the readers of MOTHER EARTH. I recommend that those questions be thoroughly discussed, and whatever conclusions the comrades will arrive at should be sent to the secretary without fail.

In conclusion, just a few more words. Some people, either out of ignorance or for personal reasons, charge that the Congress, in forming the International, was arbitrary and inconsistent with Anarchism. These good people seem to have forgotten that the proposition of an International was submitted to the comrades six months

prior to the Congress; that it was discussed and decided upon by many groups and individual comrades, and that several of the delegates were sent with the express purpose to urge the formation of the International. But aside of all this, I wish to state that the International is not to be imposed upon any group or individual.

The Bureau has no statute books, nor is there the slightest danger that it will devise any catechism which every Anarchist will be compelled to accept. As a medium for creating closer International comradeship, greater unity of action and more lasting results, the Bureau is to be heartily welcomed.

Let every comrade assist, and the Anarchist International will become a tremendous factor.

## Everlasting Murder

M. B.

*Mother Earth*, April 1911

War or peace – the slaughter continues, for the character of capitalist society is so inexorably murderous that no amount of moralising can mitigate it.

Horried we witness the carnival of death, fain to believe that these catastrophes are “accidental,” exceptional, while in reality the destruction of human life, industrial murder because of greed and inhumanity, is an established institution. In a society where profit is paramount and the fate of the toilers a negligible quantity, what other result can be expected than the most cynical indifference to the lives of the workingmen.

The hundred and forty-five victims of the fire at the shirtwaist factory of Blanck & Harris, in Washington Square, New York, have been murdered by capitalism.<sup>1</sup> The helpers and executioners in the massacre were the owners of the scab shop, the officials of the public safety department, the administration of the City of New York, and the government and legislature at Albany. These are the guilty. But as they control the machinery of “justice,” they will acquit themselves.



Within a few weeks the terrible crime will be all but forgotten and – the business of murder will continue.

May the terrible tragedy help to clarify our vision. Our grief is profound; may it bear emotions and resolves strong and effectual, worthy of our great sorrow.

With terrible clearness this crime has demonstrated how useless are the laws for the protection of the lives of the toilers. The laws are there; the rules and regulations are there; the highly paid officials are there; only the actual protection is not there. Government and officialdom are necessary, it is said, for the protection of life and property. In truth, they are capable of dooming the starving wretch to a few years' prison for stealing fifteen cents. They are indeed most faithful guardians of property. But when it concerns the effective protection of the workman's life against wholesale capitalist murder, the governmental Providence yawns and sleeps in the bureaus; or pretends to sleep, well knowing that it must not seem too watchful if it wishes to enjoy the sympathy and good will of the wealthy pillars of society. This officialdom is

<sup>1</sup> Better known as the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, the deadliest industrial disaster in the history of New York City. On Saturday, 25 March 1911, 146 people died, mostly young Jewish and Italian immigrant women workers, due to door to exits being locked – a common practice to prevent workers from taking unauthorised breaks – and a lack of sprinklers. In addition, a fire-escape overloaded and tore away from the brick wall. The company's owners, Max Blanck and Isaac Harris, were indicted on charges of first- and second-degree manslaughter but were acquitted by a jury. In 1913, they were

found liable of wrongful death during a subsequent civil suit which awarded compensation in the amount of \$75 per deceased victim. The insurance company paid Blanck and Harris about \$400 per casualty. The same year saw Blanck was once again arrested for locking the door in his factory during working hours. He was fined \$20 which was the minimum amount the fine could be. Despite Baginski's fears, it was not “all but forgotten” and led to both fire safety codes and unionisation, particularly of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. (*Black Flag*)

the “stall”<sup>1</sup> that decoys the capitalist victim. It is not its business to make such crimes as the Triangle fire impossible. Its duty is superficially to mask – by its laws, dignity, and authority – the plutocratic greed which is responsible for such holocausts.

In their simple trustfulness the “common people” believe that the governmental Providence is ever on the alert to prevent such accidents; meanwhile this good Providence is concerned mainly in removing the obstacles in the way of plutocratic exploitation and ensuring its own position and aggrandisement.

Heavy is the penalty for this error. Because the toilers believe that the government machinery is designed for their protection, they neglect themselves to take steps to insure their safety. Hence official protection is not only useless; it is positively dangerous, often fatal.

May this be the first lesson to be learned from the murder of our comrades. And may we also realise that labour possesses the power, by means of united and direct action, forever to put a stop to the wholesale slaughter of capitalist greed. Henceforth let our motto be: Away with the deceptive hope for salvation from “representatives,” politicians, and officeholders. Let us act for ourselves, on the spot: the control of the factories should be in the hands of those who work in them; the means: direct action and the general strike, and *sabotage*, which has accomplished such splendid results in the syndicalist movement of France and Italy.

It is the workers – not the landlords, manufacturers, or bosses; not the city or State authorities – that risk in the factories their health and life. It is therefore they who

should also have the right to determine the conditions under which they will work and of taking such precautions as may be necessary to safeguard them, not only on paper, but in reality. Labour would indeed deserve to be charged with immaturity and lack of

independent judgment if it will still longer continue to trust its fate to the plutocratic regime and its servants, and be persuaded to abstain from independent direct action. All too long the toilers have felt themselves mere “hands” and subjects. It is time to remember their rights as human beings and to realise their strength to assert these.

The power of labour seems weak only because it is never

fully manifested. The workingmen still fail to realise their tremendous possibilities and the great tasks they could accomplish, because they do not dare to act for themselves, without go-betweens, politicians, and arbitration boards. It is these that paralyse independent action on the part of labour and strive to divert its every effort into channels profitable to capitalism.

Not merely fire escapes and safe exits can the workers secure by the exercise of their economic power, through direct action and general stoppage of work. They are also able – though naturally after a hard struggle – entirely to abolish the industrial system of wholesale slaughter and exploitation.

Upon this aim to concentrate our efforts, to work for it in the factories and shops, and finally to achieve this noble purpose be our vow at the grave of our hundred and forty-five murdered fellow workers.

**It is the workers – not the landlords, manufacturers, or bosses; not the city or State authorities – that risk in the factories their health and life. It is therefore they who should also have the right to determine the conditions under which they will work...**

# Communism the Basis of Liberty

**Max Baginski**

*Mother Earth, May 1911*

Where it possible for some one to secure full control of the air, leaving mankind the alternative of paying tribute or strangling for want of breath, we should all of us become the serfs of the air monopoly. We should be forced to comply with its conditions, or die. Our dependence would be most absolute. This unbearable situation would be further aggravated by irony and scorn if the constitution of the land contained the solemn proviso: “All citizens are equal before the law; their liberty must not be abridged by special privileges.”

Could anyone but a fool believe in this constitution-guaranteed liberty, always remembering the command of the air monopolist: Submit or die! The liberty of choosing between submission and strangulation is but a two-edged slavery with destruction at either end.

It is this kind of liberty that the people of the “most progressive countries” enjoy. Instead of air read food, shelter, clothing, and you have the same terrible dependence of the people on the monopolists of land, pro duction, and money. The existence of the great

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<sup>1</sup> Stall: the assistant of a pickpocket who jostles the passengers in the streetcar, or starts a fight to give his partner an opportunity to rob the people.

majority is today made possible only by their slavish submission to the conditions of these masters of the earth.

Private property with its thousand and one corrupting influences is today the ruling power on earth. It dictates to the propertyless masses the compulsory statutes of their existence. To disobey those statutes, to refuse to submit or to sacrifice one's independence, means the loss of the means of existence. That is the punishment visited upon those who, though poor, strive to preserve their manhood and their individuality.

But – unfortunately? fortunately? – almost everyone adapts himself to the slavery of existence, even though many suffer, hesitate, tremble, and grit their teeth. Some go insane; many – men and women without number – are crippled bodily or mentally, or both; others – and those by no means the worst – resort to suicide. Statistics throw considerable light upon these results of our profit-civilisation.

The “justice” of this civilisation depends neither upon courts nor judges; it works “of itself,” quietly, but is more merciless and inexorable than the most hard hearted judge. It is the fate of the modern man under the rule of a production-system which is not intended to satisfy the needs of mankind, but which blindly works for the enrichment of the few.

Whether you work with your hands or your brain, if you refuse to offer yourself for sale, this “inner justice” will immediately reduce your rations, will make your clothing and shoes look shabby, will rob you of shelter and home, and finally deprive you even of the small means necessary to secure mere bread or a ten cent lodging. Before long you will have become an outcast, because you have offended against the discipline of this order which demands absolute economic submission.

Therefore try hard to sell yourself somehow or other; else you're lost and you will become a pauper, or – if you possess courage enough – you will turn criminal.

Sell your labour, ability, and intelligence; lie, cheat, and swindle for your existence. What matters man hood, personality, self-respect. You are a mere cog in the machine of the “higher powers”; you are a bond serf who hates his task, or – if you are a brain worker – an intellectual helot who propagates opinions not his own, and teaches “facts” he knows nothing of, but which in some way serve the interests of his bread-givers. All this must be borne if you are to “do well in the world. Why not? Must not the prostitute also follow her business? The same conditions which force her to sell

her body, cause also the journalist to write what he does not believe, the teacher to teach what he himself refuses to accept, or the physician to perform operations to which he would not submit himself.

The difference between the slavery of former days and the existence-bondage of today is that formerly the slaves were forcibly driven to the market, while the serfs of today offer themselves for sale of “their own free will.” It is ironically called “free competition”; but behind each miserable free competitor stand want, hunger, and anxiety, more effective and compelling than the slave-driver's whip.

The marketability of men and things impresses upon society the character of prostitution. It is prostitution to be forced, for mere existence, to sell oneself, physically or mentally, to manufacturers or publishers.

Under such conditions who can speak of the dignity of labour? Work which is forced and hateful, and of the products of which the worker is deprived, is shameful and unworthy of the thinking man.

**If we wished to  
express it in a  
paradox we should  
say: only Communism  
will secure to man  
the possession of the  
earth**

This boundless general venality necessarily comprises all the vice, evil, and crime which is the despair of the moralist and reformer, and which serve as a text to exhort man to honesty, righteousness, and neighbourly love. Empty phrases! Mankind does not live up to the moral laws laid down on paper, because the very conditions of existence are based on the principle of taking advantage of our fellow-men.

In place of the domination of private property, in place of the shameless tyranny of profit, we would put Communism. Its basic principle is, first of all, to guarantee to each man the right of existence, making the necessaries of life as accessible and free as air and sunshine. Without this fundamental right man is a pariah, a pauper at the mercy of those who own the means of existence.

The propertyless masses forever plead with the lords of the earth for compassion, for mercy and reforms, instead of depriving them of their robber-monopoly and proclaiming the earth the free homestead and storehouse of mankind. It is just as if the calves would plead with the tanner not to tan their skins too deep a hue. The tanners would ignore their plea, as the owners of the earth will continue their usury in human flesh so long as they are not deprived of their monopoly of property.

Is it not the bitterest irony that under the domination of sacred private property the majority of mankind lack all property? Under Communism, which strives to abolish private possession, there would be no millionaires,

billionaires, or stockholders, but everyone would enjoy the means necessary to a wholesome life. If we wished to express it in a paradox we should say: only Communism will secure to man the possession of the earth.

Under Communism work will not be for profit but for use. The products of free co-operative labour will not be stupidly handed over to speculation, but would be directly at the disposal of the consumer. Production and consumption would go hand in hand, eliminating the parasitism of the middle - man and trader. There would be neither room nor desire for "cold storage," to create artificial scarcity of necessaries, to advance prices for the enrichment of the speculator. Shoes, clothing, and other necessary articles will then not be manufactured for the trade, but for the needs of the community, for the men, women, and children requiring those articles. Agriculture and cattle raising will not be for the purpose of giving some speculator a corner on the products at the cost of human misery and want, but for the sake of

human well-being, to satisfy the physical needs of the people. Under such a social arrangement men would no longer be the miserable products of material conditions; they would possess the power and intelligence to order society in harmony with individual independence, and cease to be the helpless subjects of environment.

On this basis of assured existence individual liberty will flourish. For now man need no more prostitute his labour and ability, each free to follow his inclination and enjoy life to his full capacity.

Labour, science, love will no more be degraded by being sold to the highest bidder. They are freed from servitude. The place of the institutions of force and of the whip of hunger is now taken by the production-associations of free men and women.

We call ourselves Anarchists Communists because we consider the economics of Communism as the indispensable fundamental condition for social harmony and for the liberty and independence of the individual.

# **A Bankrupt Labour Paradise**

**Max Baginski**

*Mother Earth, June 1911*

With great flourish of trumpets State Socialists and reformers have been proclaiming to the world during the last decade the wonderful conditions that obtained in Australia and New Zealand. There, they said, was the new Mecca; there the new paradise was established in which enlightened govern mental wisdom achieved social and economic peace between capital and labour. While in the countries of Europe and America the struggle of the disinherited against their oppressors was growing in extent and in tensity, only messages of peace were heralded from Australia and New Zealand. All strife had been allayed there, all differences smoothed out, by wise govern mental regulation. The State – the reformers claimed – had achieved there its "real mission," which consisted in "harmonising" by regulation and statute antagonistic interests, to the equal satisfaction of the exploiters and their victims.

Superficial enthusiasts must now give up this beautiful dream, since in this very Australia and New Zealand opposition is steadily growing against this alleged mission of the State, and the people are waking to rebellion against the artificial pacification. The crafty plans of the ruling Labour party have been punctured, in spite of the circumstance that thus far that party controls a majority at the polls. Let us see what this regime has accomplished.

First of all, the "disturbing factor" of strikes was sought to be removed. Compulsory arbitration boards were established and severe laws passed for the punishment of labour bodies that dared to strike in defiance of the

decisions of the arbitration boards. The workers were held financially and legally responsible for the struggles waged against capital without permission of the State authorities. The place of economic warfare was taken by the jurisdiction of the compulsory arbitration courts. But as these usually left the workers at the mercy of capital, there gradually grew up among the more progressive elements strong opposition, which is continually gaining strength in spite of the legal persecutions and persistent attempts at suppression.

Under the protection of the reform government the workers of Australia and New Zealand have now reached the level of labour conditions in England and other countries at the beginning of the capitalist era, when strikes were looked upon as conspiracies and punished as such. The only difference is that the toilers of those days felt themselves helpless subjects of the arbitrary power of their masters, while the workers of Australia and New Zealand have been deluded into the belief that they mould their own destiny through the ballot box. Fortunately, however, there are exceptions. Some labour leaders there are who are honest and intelligent enough to see through the cruel farce and who refuse to participate in this enslavement of labour. They devote their energies to the enlightenment and revolutionising of the masses at the risk of liberty and life. On various occasions some of the larger strikes have been brutally suppressed by the armed hand of the authorities, and the best representatives of labour condemned to long imprisonment – all in the name of establishing social peace!

We now witness labour conditions in Australia and New Zealand under which the toilers are subjected to a straitjacket bound more tightly than is the case in any other country. This despotism with State Socialistic tendencies is the faithful lackey of capital in a greater degree than any government of Europe or America.

The Anarchists have all along predicted the bankruptcy of the labour paradise, for they know that under the economic mastery of the possessing class *every* government, whatever its form, must prove the political handmaid of the exploiters. Has not St. Marx himself said that political institutions are but the reflex of economic conditions? If that be so, what folly, what deceit it is to make the workers believe that their condition can be changed, or improved, through the ballot, parliaments, or government regulation.

Reasoning this thought out further, the Social Democrats of America could well profit by the lesson of Australia. Those who are so enthused with admiration and filled with hope regarding the numerous bills and proposals submitted by Representative Berger to Congress, should take to heart the tragic failure of labour legislation in Australia and New Zealand.

In the busted labour paradise of those countries no disturbing finger was laid upon the economic foundation of exploitation. There was no idea of

attacking wage slavery; no notion whatever that the land and the fruits of labour should belong to the producers instead of being monopolised by the non-producing class. What actually was attempted was this: leaving the groundwork of exploitation and oppression perfectly intact, all energies were bent upon devising political and

legal schemes for disguising the evil results of our social system of inequality and injustice. With harmony as their motto, the politicians were busily forging new chains for the people, and when the latter finally lay helpless on the ground, securely bound by the strong fetters of legislative regulation and restriction, the masters triumphantly cried, See how peacefully and harmoniously we live in this reform State!

The power of the ruling class results from the wealth wrung from the life and blood of the toilers. If the latter are to achieve emancipation, they must refuse to give up the riches they create. To make this refusal effective, and to initiate the era of economic and social equality, economic warfare is of absolute necessity, culminating in the final revolutionary general strike. Political or legal palliatives, à la Australia and New Zealand, but serve to obscure this aim and delay its accomplishment.

This lesson the workers of Australia, and the international proletariat in general, will sooner or later learn from the experience of State Socialism applied.

## **There was no idea of attacking wage slavery; no notion whatever that the land and the fruits of labour should belong to the producers**

# **The Right to Live**

**M. B.**

*Mother Earth*, January 1911

Modern man is plentifully equipped with political rights. He has the right of citizenship, provided he be virtuous and not an Anarchist; he may elect his own rulers and jailers; he even enjoys, as one of the majority, the privilege of witnessing the government act "in the name of the people."

This privilege is a particularly bad hoax, because the activities of the government and courts have usually the sole purpose of intensifying the robbery and subjection of the people; in other words, the people - in their own sacred name - doom themselves to dependence and slavery.

The hollowness and sham of political rights becomes fully apparent when we consider that all of them combined do not include *the right to live*.

The right to live, - that is, the securing of the means of existence, the organisation of society in a manner to insure to each the material basis of life and make it as self-evident as breathing, - this right present society cannot give to man.

The barbaric character of the dominant forms of existence is never so offensively demonstrated as when we subject the right to live to a critical test. This right is attacked and nullified daily in a thousand various ways by coercion, poverty, and dependence. It is cruel irony to justify the existence of the murderous machinery of government, with its brutal imbecile laws, on the ground that it is necessary for "the protection of life and property."

Among the thousands of laws and statutes there is not a single paragraph that guarantees to each member of

society the right to live. The tender care for property is of little avail; for it is the chief characteristic of a society based on the sanctity of property that the great majority do not possess sufficient property to justify the expensive machinery of police, courts, jailers and hangmen.

The right to live is primarily dependent upon possession and consequent power. But as only a small minority is in possession and control, the right to live remains a chimera so far as the majority is concerned.

Anarchism regards the right to live as the pivot of its philosophy. It considers it the indispensable foundation of a society that claims to be humane.

Today the needy, the hungry and the homeless man finds no providence, no court where he may appeal the right to live. Were he to claim it, to test this right, he would soon find himself in the workhouse or prison. In the midst of fabulous wealth, he often lacks even the bare necessities of existence. He stands isolated, forsaken. In a glance, at every turn, he beholds a plenitude of food, clothing and comforts, a thousandth part of which would save him from despair and

destruction. But not even the minutest right to live gives him the power over the things, the lack of which turns him into a social pariah.

What avail the rights of citizenship, political "liberties," or his one-day sovereignty as a voter, when he is deprived of the right to live and robbed of the use of the things he needs?

When everything, every essential of life is the monopoly of a certain class – secured by laws, armies, courts, and scaffolds – it is evident that the possessing class will completely dominate life, with the consequent subjection of the rest of the people.

The demand of the right to live is the most revolutionary demand of our day. The privileged are aware of it. Wherever the demand is voiced seriously, where it is accompanied by corresponding action, where the disinherited resort to expropriation, to the general strike, the guardians of "order" at once realise that the banner of the social revolution is fluttering in the wind.

*Ceterum censeo!* What is today hypocritically called "order" must fall and perish ere the right to live may become a joyous reality.

# **Syndicalist Tendencies in the American Labour Movement**

**Max Baginski**

*Mother Earth*, February 1912

In the beginning of May, 1886, 366,000 organised American workmen voiced the demand for the eight-hour day. It was made in connection with a demonstration of 15, 000 employees of the Gould South-western railroad lines that took place some weeks previously to protest against the miserably low wages. The latter ranged, in some places, between 55-75 cents per day.

Of the 366,000 workers, 150,000 immediately won their demands, as we learn from Sartorius von Waltershausen in his book "Modern Socialism in the United States." 216,000 men participated in the strike. Of this number 42,000 gained the eight-hour day, so that altogether 192,000 men won their demands.

It is conceivable that these self-reliant, aggressive workers, permeated with what today is known as the syndicalist spirit, drew upon themselves the fury of the plutocracy. Brutal persecution followed, the cry being raised that the country was in danger of Anarchy. In Chicago, then the firing line of the movement, the most able and energetic men of labour were brought to trial, which ended with the since historically branded judicial murder of five of the accused.

Under this hard pressure labour here and there lost the gained advantage. However, more than a 100,000 men enjoyed a workday shortened by one hour, and in some instances even by 3 and 4 hours.

This first great struggle of the American proletariat bore the chief features of syndicalism. The eight-hour day, and the consequent numerous strikes, became the cause of the workers in all the industries. General direct action, the solidarity of the different branches took the place of isolated craft conflicts. It was the initial step toward the general strike, which modern syndicalists advocate as the most effective weapon toward final emancipation from wage slavery.

That notwithstanding severe police persecution and oppression a comparatively great success was attained, was due mainly to the fact that the lines of battle were sharply drawn: arbitration, impartial conferences, and well-meaning go-betweens were not permitted to obscure the situation.

The strength of a movement depends on the clarity and determination of its aim and activities. A common cause, the vision of an ideal that is rooted in the soil of material existence and yet opens up new horizons of a grander future, is more effective in cementing the ranks

of labour than the external successes with which so-called conservative labour leaders seek to satisfy the workers.

This inspiring vision is embodied in the syndicalist idea that the primal condition for the emancipation of labour is the abrogation of wage slavery. The syndicalists refuse to be bound by year-long contracts, based upon the continuation of the wage system and thus sanctioning the same. They regard strikes and sabotage as the outposts for the establishment of a communist commonwealth in which there shall be no trusts, either capitalist or labour.

The difference between the French *Confédération Generale du Travail*, the organisation which at present best expresses the syndicalist spirit, and the American Federation of Labor can be defined as follows: The French labour body is a consciously revolutionary, proletarian organisation, while the A.F. of L., intellectually and in point of principle, represents no particular attitude.

Nearest to the syndicalist idea is in America the organisation of the I. W. W. In contrast to the A. F. of L., which consists of craft organisations, each independently making contracts with the employers, the I.W.W. propagates industrial unity. It is a long step forward. It signifies, first of all, the abolition of the petty, egotistic spirit of branch grouping, and the development instead of general solidarity and the active operation of all the workers of an industry. Thus, if the employees of the Harriman railroad lines were to use their energies along syndicalist ideas, all the workers of the system would immediately join the strike and thus make it impossible for the company to continue its crippled traffic – a situation detrimental to the interests of the strikers and threatening their success, as well as dangerous to the traveling public.

Not corporation but cooperation is the motto of syndicalism. Cooperation and solidarity not merely in national, but also in the international struggles of the proletariat.

Syndicalist tendencies also characterise the strike of the textile workers in Lawrence, Mass., which at the present writing seems to be assuming larger proportions. The situation imperatively demands a general strike. Moreover, this does not apply only to Lawrence, or any

separate industrial district, but to the whole country. The general strike is in the air. It forces itself upon the workers through the logic of conditions: compared with the tremendous combines of capital, the little craft strikes are as ineffectual as a worn-out, ancient spinning wheel in comparison with the modern giant steam loom.

A feature of the Lawrence strike, worthy particular consideration, is the manner in which the manufacturers seek to profit by the labour laws. Several union leaders of the quality of those who dance attendance in legislative lobbies, recently proclaimed their success in having a labour bill made into law by the lawgivers of Massachusetts. It provided that women and minors should not be employed for more than 54 hours in any one week, as against the 56 hours previously in force. But now it has become apparent that this labour law, like most of similar makeshifts, is a paper miscarriage. It was passed as a result of a miserable compromise between the labour leaders and the textile

magnates. It was promised to the manufacturers that they shall in future have peace – no more demands should hereafter be made upon them, no strikes be put in operation, if they would permit the passage of the labour bill. The mill owners gladly agreed. They realised that the indirect political activity would prove much cheaper to them than the possible direct economic tactics of the workers. The law became operative, and the manufacturers – on the strength of the leaders' promise of a free hand in the factories – at once began to take advantage of the new statute by reducing the wages from 10-15 per cent. They had made peace with the labour leaders!

This foul peace has fortunately been destroyed by the strike. But the diplomatic leaders are lustily assuring the manufacturers and the press that the revolt of the textile workers is not “sanctioned,” – not sanctioned by those who should consider themselves lucky if they are not ignominiously driven from the ranks of labour.

Considering the failure of labour laws, the failure of labour politics, and the bitter disappointments the toilers have suffered at the ballot box, and necessarily must always suffer, it is time the workers should turn to the inherent power residing in them as producers – their economic power. The beginning has already been made. Forward! The shortest way is the best.

**The strength of a movement depends on the clarity and determination of its aim and activities... the syndicalist idea [is] that the primal condition for the emancipation of labour is the abrogation of wage slavery. The syndicalists... regard strikes and sabotage as the outposts for the establishment of a communist commonwealth**



# State Socialism at Work

Max Baginski

*Mother Earth*, July 1912

Since Socialism became infested with politics and politicians, it has grown to be a hindrance and a positive danger to the labour movement. The proceedings at the recent Convention of the Socialist party in Indianapolis, and the platform adopted there, clearly prove that the party has delivered itself soul and body to the politicians. The main object of the convention seems to have been to clean its skirts from the least suspicion of revolutionary tendencies, and to go on record as a most desirable and law-abiding body. It was chiefly concerned with demonstrating to the voting masses its bourgeois respectability and feverishly anxious to excommunicate the revolutionary element. The leaders came to the convention determined to raise such a solid wall around the party that not the least ray of syndicalist, proletarian aspiration should glimmer through. Sabotage was voted a crime, and direct action and the general strike put under the ban. No words were minced in avowing that the Socialist party is a vote-gathering machine, pure and simple, and that the common citizen may safely cast his ballot for it, without fear of in the least disturbing existing "law and order."

The following amendment which is to be submitted to the referendum vote, leaves no doubt as to the position of the Socialist party:

"Any member of the party who opposes political action or advocates sabotage or other methods of violence as a weapon of the working class to aid in its emancipation, shall be expelled from membership of the party. Political action shall be construed to mean participation in elections for public office and practical legislative and administrative work along the lines of the Socialist party platform."

This was a hint "with a lamp-post" to Haywood and his followers, who fully understood it and meekly submitted to the superior wisdom of the would be party statesmen.

What is dished up in the platform as "principles" is nothing but lifeless centralism and thinly masked government monopoly. The government – State and federal – is the great Saviour. It need but "take over" the

railroads, telegraphs, mines, etc., to usher in the millennium for labour. All experience shows that the workers in State-owned industries are enslaved and exploited even more than by private employers. But the Socialist platform editors have carefully avoided mentioning that. The expressions collective, public, democratic, cooperative are synonymous in the Indianapolis platform with governmental, bureaucratic, centralistic. Evidently the Socialist statesmen were ashamed to present State monopoly and governmental bureaucracy in all its unmasked repulsiveness.

There is not a word in the long-winded document about labour associations to regulate production and distribution according to the needs of the people, without recourse to governmental or private ownership, as true Socialism teaches. It is the State and always the State whose praise is sung as the great Saviour. What matter if the State, as all history proves, is the arch enemy of labour, tyrannising, oppressing, and slaughtering the masses. It is only necessary to vote the Socialistic candidates into office, and the State will at once be transformed from a wolf to a lamb, and become the benefactor of society – just as in England and France, where the Burnses and Millerands have climbed into office upon the backs of the workers, and then turned traitors to labour by becoming the strongest pillars of the much-hated plutocratic government.<sup>1</sup>

Let the Socialists continue on this way. The road is short, and it ends in a blind alley. In Europe political Socialism has done great harm to the labour movement because it has succeeded in duping the masses with superficial, revolutionary-sounding phrases. In this country, however, the game will not last long. The reverends, lawyers, and other Socialist politicians offer to the people such an empty, bare program, so entirely devoid of anything to inspire enthusiasm, that they can at most snare only an occasional middle-class vote. The direct economic struggle of the American proletariat against State and capital is constantly becoming more intense and compelling, and the great mass of the workers will not be deceived by the crude clap trap of State Socialism.

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<sup>1</sup> A reference to two socialists turned mainstream politician. John Burns (1858-1943) was an English Socialist who played a major role in the 1889 London Dock Strike before being elected as a Liberal Member of Parliament in 1892. Alexandre Millerand (1859-1943) was a French Socialist politician elected in 1885 who joined Waldeck-Rousseau's

cabinet in 1899 alongside the Marquis de Galliffet who had directed the repression of the 1871 Paris Commune, sparking a debate within the Second International about the participation of socialists in bourgeois governments. (*Black Flag*)

# The Troubles of Socialist Politicians

Max Baginski

*Freedom*, May 1913

If it were not for the Syndicalists and Anarchists, the politicians of the Social Democracy would be happy folk. They could gloat undisturbed over the fractional increase of Socialist votes, and they would have the required equanimity of soul to undertake the much-needed revision of the

materialist conception of history, so that it could be made to apply to all emergency cases. They would also have time to direct evolution, so that it should not fail to follow the lines laid down for it by the party executive. They would even have leisure to prepare a few hundred rigorous regulations and laws for the great moment when, after the second or third deluge, they shall have a sufficient majority in Congress to usher in the Socialist State. There would be no one to disturb them when they declare their party – whose leaders are chiefly lawyers, editors, and cockroach bosses – to be the only real class-conscious proletarian party. It would all be nice and smooth sailing – according to programme – if the bad Syndicalists and Anarchists could only be persuaded to hand the Labour movement over – bound hand and foot – to the Social Democracy, as its sole copyrighted and patented monopoly.

But the Syndicalists and Anarchists are a stubborn lot. They even presume to become bolder every day, deluding ever greater masses of Labour with new inspiration and energy. They are inculcating the proletariat with a mission that fills the workers with fire

and purpose, and makes life worthwhile. They point toward the horizon where there is appearing the vision of a brighter day, the Dawn of Anarchist Communism, and this goal is inspiring the agitation for Direct Action, Sabotage, and the General Strike.

Wherever *these* appear in the arena of the great struggle, the “representatives of Labour” in the halls of legislation lose their inflated importance – to the great anguish of the Socialist politicians, for their whole scheme is based upon the claim of representing Labour. These representatives – be they a Socialist sheriff, alderman, or mayor – soon make it quite clear that their oath of office demands faithful service to the State, and that they are determined to exert their best efforts to improve the bureaucratic administration, and to do their duty, even far more loyally and honestly than their bourgeois predecessors, as the legally elected officials of a system whose only purpose is to perpetuate capitalism and wage-slavery.

This is the situation. The Social Democrats will soon be at the end of the blind alley into which “political success” has lured them. But far from placing the blame where it belongs, they lay it at the door of the Syndicalists and Anarchists, who are causing so much mischief in the Labour movement. These they attack with the Jesuitic methods of Marx, Engels, Hyndman, and Plechanov, and curse them after the good precept of the infallible Pope with his bulls against the heretics.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henry Hyndman (1842-1921) was an English writer, politician and Marxist. Originally a conservative, he was converted to Marxism by the *Communist Manifesto* and launched Britain’s first Socialist political party, the Democratic Federation, later known as the Social Democratic Federation, in 1881. He played a key role in popularising

Marx’s ideas in English but his authoritarianism led to a split in the Federation in 1884, with William Morris amongst others leaving the party to form the Socialist League. He supported the Allies in World War One (forming the National Socialist Party) and opposed the Bolshevik revolution; Georgi Plekhanov (1856-1918) was originally a populist but became

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At present one of the Socialist crusaders, Robert Hunter, has entered the lists and drawn his pen against the disturbers, determined to vanquish and annihilate them, root, branch, and all.

Some of his articles are very readable, indeed, since they incorporate long quotations from Syndicalist and Anarchist thinkers. They have been selected by Hunter to demonstrate the close affinity between Syndicalism and Anarchism, and they really give an air of living vitality to the series.

Hunter laboured hard to adduce this proof of relationship between the philosophies of Syndicalism and Anarchism. Can there be a stronger condemnation of Syndicalism than to prove its kinship with Anarchism, in view of the ignorant popular prejudice against and misconceptions of Anarchism? But the Hunter gentlemen may be mistaken. The time is here when the Philistine fear of Anarchism is beginning to be dissipated among the ranks of Labour, and soon it will be more generally realised that it was always Anarchism that gave the greatest impetus to the international Labour movement, that kept it young and energetic, thus saving it from sinking into the mire of Parliamentary cretinism. Not the Social Democratic politicians, but the Anarchists and Syndicalists have ever kept burning the fire of true Socialism – i.e., Communism.

Marx and his clique succeeded at one time to misrepresent Bakunin and his comrades. The political Socialists have always been past-masters at this sort of propaganda. But after almost two generations of political rope-dancing, the Labour movement is beginning, on a scale larger than ever before, to pick up again the thread of those ideas which had been propagated by the Anarchist-Syndicalist wing of the old *Internationale*. The years that passed since then, and the experience learned have clearly proved that the degeneration of true Socialism into political schemes has caused deep wounds to the international Labour movement, which it is the highest time to begin to heal.

Hunter says that the Anarchists falsely understand by political activity mere voting and office seeking. Political activity means much more, he claims. But, unfortunately, his articles fail to point out the “much more,” and it remains a mystery. The Anarchists can substantiate their assertion that political activity means nothing more than vote gathering by proving that the Socialist parties of every country have always persecuted and excommunicated all those whose conception of political activity transcended mere voting

and office getting. The Social Democracy has everywhere “developed” and become “purified” by driving the revolutionary elements from its ranks, and ever welcoming the reformists, busybodies, and politicians *sans phrase*.

Tearfully Hunter complains that in America also we could have a Social Democratic movement of the wonderful proportions of Germany, were it not for the activity of that bad man, John Most, who destroyed the promising beginnings with his Anarchist-Syndicalist propaganda.<sup>1</sup> This reference of Hunter directly bears upon [Big Bill] Haywood, for the purpose of creating the impression that Haywood, as dangerous a character as Most, might prove the rock upon which Socialist politics would be wrecked, if he is not speedily thrown out of the party – which has since come to pass, Haywood being voted out of the National Executive Committee by a two-thirds majority. If it be true that Most succeeded in preventing the establishment in this country of a Socialist Vatican similar to that of Germany, it would be immensely to his credit. For it is due mainly to the Social Democratic Party of Germany that Socialism has degenerated to the point where nothing but politicians can find a welcome in it. Its deadening discipline, its dogmas, intolerance; and machine politics have exalted the political office seekers in every country where German Socialism has been taken as a model. The more thoroughly the international Labour movement frees itself from the influence of the German Social Democracy, the sooner it will grow to manhood and come into its own....

In his articles Hunter naturally tries very hard to prove the Anarchists and Syndicalists to be hopeless impossibilists; yet evidently without much satisfaction to himself. He expresses the fear that, all odds notwithstanding, they have a future in the Labour movement, and that the solemn exorcism of the Social Democratic statesmen is powerless to suppress them. In one place he says: “It is perhaps inevitable that the views of the Anarchists should gain a larger and larger following. Political action is slow, and many of the younger, the more petulant and impulsive, are impatient.”

Political action is not only slow; it leads nowhere save into the swamp of barrenness, disappointment, and futility. It is worse than slow; it is rotten. It is a most encouraging sign that the young generation is beginning to lose patience with it.

M. BAGINSKI,  
in *Mother Earth* [March 1913]

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a founder of the social-democratic movement in Russia and was one of the first Russians to identify himself as “Marxist”. Author of the terrible pamphlet *Anarchism and Socialism* (1895), he was known as the “father of Russian Marxism” and also supported the Allies in World War One and opposed the Bolshevik revolution. (*Black Flag*)

<sup>1</sup> While Most played a key role in forming the International Working People’s Association in 1883 and its Chicago section embraced the traditional anarchist tactics of syndicalism, he himself did not support syndicalism until the late 1880s. (*Black Flag*)

# “How we shall bring about the Revolution”

Max Baginski

*Mother Earth*, June 1913

This is the sub-title of a book, “Syndicalism and The Co-operative Commonwealth,”<sup>1</sup> recently translated into English from the French. The authors are two of the ablest interpreters of the Syndicalist philosophy, in thought and practice: Emile Pataud and Emile Pouget. The work also contains a foreword by Tom Mann and a preface by Comrade Kropotkin.<sup>2</sup>

The book pictures a revolutionary Syndicalist Utopia, and – as occasionally happens with good Utopias – it reflects in the mirror of time a more adequate picture of the Existing and of the Becoming than many a heavy rationalistic discourse that pretends to keep close to “facts.”

From the very first pages the reader feels himself in the midst of an epoch following the great Social Revolution. In the most vivid manner he learns of the methods by which capitalistic conditions led up to the revolution; how the latter developed and overcame the old institutions and powers, destroying them and forming new social conditions that finally culminated in the co-operative commonwealth, that resembles Anarchist Communism like a twin brother.

The book is especially to be recommended to those painstaking ones who worry a great deal about the details of life the day after the revolution-how people will breathe, eat, and live. It is good medicine for those who are so diseased with prejudice that they cannot conceive how people will continue to live after the downfall of present conditions; aye, live better and freer without oppressing, exploiting, and deceiving each other.

A strike in the building trades, during which the workers are shot down by the police and soldiery, becomes the factor that sets the revolutionary avalanche in motion. Impatience, misery, and hatred had for long, long years been accumulating in the hearts of men. From generation to generation the toilers had been waiting and hoping for one governmental régime and another to bring relief, for this party and that to improve their conditions, till at last they came to realise that no party and no régime would or could help them-neither monarchy, republic, or Social Democracy. Awakening at last, they began to find their own weapons for offence against the old capitalistic society – the revolutionary

labour unions, the *Confédération Generale du Travail*, in which Syndicalist thought was expressed with the greatest clearness.

The revolutionary labour organisations constitute the starting point of revolutionary action, which does not consist in the people massing themselves on one point, to be easily massacred by organised violence. The Social Revolution begins with the General Strike. Its weapons are manifold. With sabotage and expropriation-without centralisation, used in a manner to leave no easy point of attack, more destruction is wrought in the industrial and governmental system than by the greatest fight on the barricades. And gradually it transpires that the most important functions of the State and capitalist machine become disorganised, if not wholly paralysed, when the workers in solidaric unity merely fold their arms. Nor is it necessary at this stage to have the “compact majority.” The determination and enthusiasm of a minority magnetically draws the masses along.

Darkness reins in Paris at night. The gas and electrical works are put out of order. Street cars and motor busses are at a standstill. Telegraph wires have been cut in numerous places, and railroad trains arrive at demolished bridges or obstructed tunnels, and are forced to halt. No newspapers appear, in which the government could shape public sentiment by means of misrepresentation and lies. The authorities try to fill the places of the strikers with soldiers. But the systematic sabotage of the preceding days has to such an extent disorganised the system, that it would require months of skilled effort to bring things into normal operation. Moreover, the soldiers, commandeered to industrial pursuits, have considerably decreased the military strength of the government, thus affording opportunity to the workers for successful expropriations and well-planned attacks upon military depots and provision houses. For this war is not conducted in open formation. It is fought in a thousand places at once by determined individuals and small, conscious minorities.

These tactics dishearten and weaken the authorities. Used to blind obedience on the part of the masses and to their respect for law and property, the masters became

<sup>1</sup> *Syndicalism and the Co-operative Commonwealth*. Cloth \$1.00, paper 750. To be had through MOTHER EARTH.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Mann’s forward can be found in *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Volume 1 Number 3 (Autumn 2021) while

Kropotkin’s preface is in *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology* (AK Press, 2014). (*Black Flag*)

demoralised, helpless in the face of the spirit of ever-increasing disobedience and active rebellion. They feel the bottom slipping from beneath their feet. Their last hope, the army, is also beginning to disintegrate, chiefly because the soldiers find little interest and less glory in the humdrum task of carrying on industry. Moreover, their allowance of rations is steadily becoming less and less. The revolutionary organisations exert their utmost efforts to withdraw the means of subsistence primarily from those institutions which are vital to the defence of social injustice and industrial oppression. Added to this is a most intensive anti-militarist propaganda, so that the nearer the decisive struggle approaches, the soldiers are less anxious to continue to kill or be killed for the privileged ones.

With the army, the strongest bulwark of capitalism, on which it always relied as its only defence, breaks down the government and parliament. They have become superfluous, without any function to perform.

Meanwhile there are developing the germs of a communistic society. The revolutionary organisations are not merely the starting point of the revolution; they are also the nucleus of the new society that is to be. They begin the reorganisation of production and distribution, in co-operation with individual trades and industries. They take over and confiscate industrial establishments to be operated co-operatively, without

master or profit. They take care of the homeless and hungry, and give them food and lodging. To provision the community is their first thought, inspired as they are in their revolutionary activity by the words of Blanqui: "Twenty-four hours after the revolution, the people must realise that they are less miserable." The errors of former revolutions are not to be repeated. No central power, under whatever name – yet always representing a new government – is to hamper the growth and spread of the revolution. The Bank of France is expropriated, and the funds applied to bridge the transition period. Great care is taken to supply the people with arms, to be prepared for defence against the possible invasion on the part of a national or international reaction.

We have sketched here but in a very general way the manner in which "How We Shall Bring About the Revolution" portrays the death of the old and the birth of the new world. We urge everyone to read the book. It is an extremely useful work, very simple and clear, and full of valuable suggestions. It is written in the spirit of strong conviction, enthusiasm, and faith, without which no great achievement is possible. It presents a picture of the future that must appeal not only to the wage workers, but also to the intellectuals, to artists and writers, and to everyone to whom liberty and independence are not the empty sound of a vain dream.

## **Michael Bakunin (1814-1914)**

### **Max Baginski**

*Mother Earth*, May 1914

In the spring of 1861 there arrived in San Francisco a man who had a long and eventful journey behind him. He came all the way from Siberia, where he had passed four years in exile. Previous to that he was imprisoned in the dungeons of Saxony, Austria and Russia. In Saxony he had been sentenced to death because of his participation in the Dresden uprising. Extradited to Austria, he was again condemned to die. Then followed his extradition to Russia, where he was kept six years in the Petro-Pavlov fortress. Transferred to the dreaded Schlüsselburg casemates, he was subsequently doomed to lifelong exile in Siberia.

Twelve years of this persecution and torture passed before he succeeded in finding his way to liberty. Under many difficulties he escaped from Siberia, crossed Japan, and thence reached the United States. Soon he was in London, where he immediately renewed his revolutionary connections and threw himself into his former work with an energy and enthusiasm as if all the persecution he had suffered merely served to rejuvenate him.

The name of this refugee was Michael Bakunin. Born May 20<sup>th</sup> (May 8<sup>th</sup>, according to the Russian calendar),

1814, he enjoyed all the advantages of a child of a wealthy family that belonged to the oldest Russian nobility. Young Bakunin might have easily attained to something "great" in the official circles of Russia, after he graduated from the Imperial Artillery School and became an army officer. But his rebellious temperament, his passionate love of liberty, and his rich mental endowments all combined to alienate him from the world of bureaucracy, and made him one of the great, significant personalities whose name will for all time be associated with the noblest struggles of humanity to break its fetters.

In the personality of Bakunin was incarnate the spirit of the Social Revolution. He was the very reverse of the *genus* politician who cunningly builds up his party and becomes absorbed therein. He gave himself fully, abandoned himself completely to his ideal, while the politician carefully calculates the steps he must climb to reach his goal. 'Tis the eternal contrast between the idealist and the politician: the one espouses liberty as wide as the world, the other awaits a favourable opportunity for advancement; the one devotes himself entirely to revolution, the other adapts himself to circumstances. It is because of this contrast that the

politician wins momentary triumph, the real value of which soon shrinks, while the revolutionist achieves little success during his lifetime and personally often suffers a tragic fate – but the fire of his being, the directness and oneness of his purpose continue to inspire the hearts and minds of mankind long after his death.

No doubt Karl Marx, Bakunin’s antagonist in the International Workingmen’s Association – a organised fifty years ago – is still held in high esteem. But one thinks of him as a scholastic, a theoretician, the founder of a system that began with the claim of infallibility, but which is now doomed to disintegration, its very foundations crumbling to dust. No such musty chill breathes from Bakunin. His lifework is not an appeal to mere intellectuality; he speaks to the whole man, the most precious part of whom is still his strong will, his instincts and passions.

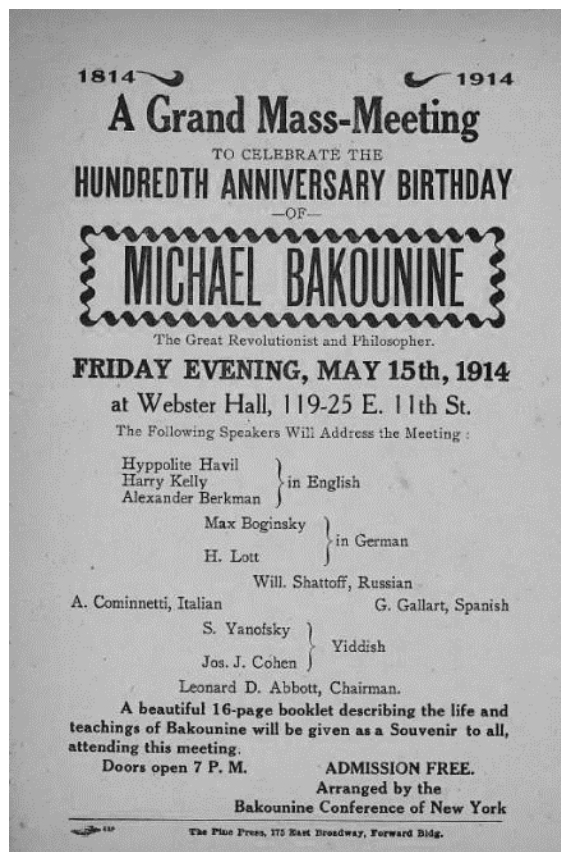
Young Bakunin worked his way through the abstruse books of the German philosophers, and later became active in the conspiratory and revolutionary uprisings of almost every country in Europe. In all these struggles his efforts were directed towards the demolition of every form of tyranny: God, State, capitalism, every meta physical as well as physical despotism was to be destroyed before justice and liberty could triumph. His manifold activities brought him in personal contact with most of the thinkers and propagandists of the social revolutionary movement of his time. He carried on long discussions of social problems with Proudhon; he was in close touch with Netchayev, the most zealous and reck less of Russian revolutionists, as well as with Alexander Herzen. Common ideas made Richard Wagner kin to him in the days of the Dresden uprising, and he was an intimate friend of the poet-revolutionist George Herwegh. There was hardly any individual type of revolutionist that Bakunin failed to meet in his

stormy career. From the wealth of his experience – with individuals, events, theories, principles – there crystallised in his later years the conviction that the proletariat can never hope for liberation except through its own efforts. In a letter to the members of the Jura Federation, with whom he had worked and struggled and who stood by him in spite of all the slanders of the Marx clique, he left a sort of testament that is of especial significance at the present time when the workers throughout the world are beginning to see the emptiness of political phrases. In this letter – the last greeting to his former comrades – he says:

“By birth and personal position I am a bourgeois, and as such I could carry on only theoretical propaganda amongst you. But I have come to the conclusion that the time for theoretical work, written or spoken, is past. \* \* \* This is not a time for ideas; it is the time for action, for deeds. And first of all it is necessary to organise the power of the proletariat. But this organisation must be the work of the proletariat itself. If I were young I would go into the midst of the workers and by taking part in the daily life and struggles of my brothers, I would aid in this most important work of organisation. But neither my age nor my health permit it now. Organise, constantly organise the international militant solidarity of the workers, in every trade

and country, and remember that however weak you are as isolated individuals or districts, you will constitute a tremendous, invincible power by means of universal cooperation.”

This is the same militant spirit that breathes now in the best expressions of the Syndicalist and I. W. W. movements. Indeed, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Michael Bakunin comes at a time of a strong world-wide revival of the ideas for which Bakunin laboured throughout his life with such wonderful devotion, perseverance and courage.



**“...it is necessary to organise the power of the proletariat. But this organisation must be the work of the proletariat itself... Organise, constantly organise the international militant solidarity of the workers, in every trade and country, and... you will constitute a tremendous, invincible power by means of universal cooperation”**      **– Michael Bakunin**

# Rudolf Rocker 1873-1958

Colin Ward

*Freedom: The Anarchist Weekly*, 27 September 1958

Early this month Rudolf Rocker died in New York at the age of 85. He might be called the last of the anarchist sages, the last of those teachers and propagandists who were known and read by the sparse and scattered anarchist minority in every continent. No other anarchist author since the days of Malatesta and Kropotkin has been published in

Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Bombay, Buenos Aires, London, New York, San Francisco, Stockholm and Shanghai. Rocker in his own person exemplified the truly international character of the anarchist movement. A South German, who in his early twenties became a political refugee in Paris, he spent years in Britain becoming both the spokesman and the inspiration of the Polish and Russian Jewish workers' movement in the East End of London. Later, after being interned and deported, he emerged, in Augustine Souchy's words, "the founder and theorist of German libertarianism", and, driven in turn from Germany, became a prolific anarchist journalist in the United States, not only in the American Jewish press, but in the anarchist papers of Central and South America and in the press of the exiled Spaniards on both sides of the Atlantic.

His place as an anarchist thinker is in the tradition of what used to be called communist-anarchism (before the word communism developed its exclusively Marxist significance), with an emphasis on syndicalism as a means of social struggle, which won him the esteem of the Spanish C.N.T.-F.A.I. He was not in any way a sectarian and deplored the weakening of the libertarian movement by ideological narrowness. But this very tolerance and insistence that anarchism should not stand apart from the main stream of social endeavour and activity, led him late in life to points of view very far from those of the anarchist tradition. His attitude towards the last war, set out



**Rudolf Rocker (1873-1958)**

in his article "The Order of the Hour" published in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* at the time of America's entry into the war in 1941, was bitterly criticised in Marcus Graham's Freedom Press pamphlet "The Issues in the Present War", and his pamphlet *Zur Betrachtung der Lage in Deutschland*, published in Sweden in 1947, in which he advocated a revision of traditional anarchist attitudes in view of the particular and desperate situation in Germany at the time, gave rise to another controversy.

At the same time, the habits of thought which gave rise to Rocker's 'revisionism' and to positions which are untenable from an anarchist point of view, were also the mainsprings of an anarchist attitude free from Messianic utopianism, revolutionary mysticism, and the belief in universal solutions.

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Rocker was born on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1873 at Mainz on the Rhine. His parents died during his childhood and he was brought up in a Catholic orphanage. Influenced by his uncle, Rudolf Naumann, he was drawn towards the underground socialist movement, but was repelled by the rigidity and authoritarianism of the German Social Democratic movement. "It was clear to me," he wrote of this period,

"that socialism was not a simple question of a full belly, but a question of culture that would have to enlist the sense of personality and the free initiative of the individual; without freedom it would lead only to a dismal state capitalism which would sacrifice all individual thought and feeling to a fictitious collective interest."



After his apprenticeship to the craft of bookbinding, he wandered as a journeyman in the old German custom through several countries, making contact everywhere with the anarchists, and settling in Paris in 1893, coming to London two years later in order to take over the production of anarchist propaganda intended for smuggling into Germany. In 1898 he was asked to become editor of the Yiddish paper *Arbeter Fraint* which had been founded thirteen years earlier in Whitechapel, and two years later began a new Yiddish monthly *Germinal* which sought "to acquaint its readers with all libertarian tendencies in modern literature and contemporary thought." How he managed, he reflected later, "to write both papers and to set one of them as well is still a puzzle to me." From this time until 1914 Rocker was busy, not only with the weekly and the monthly, but on the platform, in the efforts to organise the workers in the tailoring and baking trades, and lecturing on literary subjects at the Sugar Loaf public house in Hanbury Street.

On the outbreak of the first world war Rocker and his wife Milly Witcop (who died three years ago) were arrested. She was imprisoned without trial; he was interned, and for four years was the spokesman of his fellow prisoners and the implacable defender of their rights, fostering solidarity between them, educating them, making use of the miserable situation in which they found themselves to open their eyes to the worlds of literature and social thought.

Deported to Holland at the end of the war (for though he was an 'enemy alien' to the British, he had also been deprived of his citizenship by the German government), he returned to Germany in the revolution of 1919, he drew up the declaration of principles of the German Syndicalist union F.A.U.D. In a period of intense activity, after the murder of Gustav Landauer and the imprisonment of Erich Mühsam, Rocker with Fritz Kater and Augustine Souchy strove to win German socialism away from the authoritarianism and centralism of the S.P.D. and K.P.D.

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On the advent of the Nazis, Rocker left Germany with little more than the manuscript of the book he had been working on for years, *Nationalism and Culture*. In the United States some of the Jewish immigrants who years before had heard Rocker's lectures in England, introduced a small group of people on the West Coast to his manuscript. A Rocker Publications Committee was formed in Los Angeles and the first American edition of the book was brought out by Covici-Friede in 1937. Rocker and his wife settled at Crompond, New York, and he gathered up the threads of his work, writing in the anarchist press and lecturing all over the continent.

During the second world war he was designated an 'enemy alien' by the American authorities and restrictions were placed on his movements. Even after the war, in his old age, Rudolf and Milly Rocker were 'investigated' and it was rumoured that they would be deported. Happily this did not happen, but the threat of it symbolises the whole course of Rocker's life. Obligated to leave Imperial Germany in his youth, and deprived of his citizenship under the Bismarckian anti-socialist laws, deported from Britain after four years behind barbed wire, placed 'under protection' by the Weimar republic after the German revolution, fleeing from Germany one step ahead of the Nazi security police, this mildest of anarchists was indeed a man without a country.

Of Rocker's books, by far the most important is *Nationalism and Culture*, a sustained demolition of the ideas of historical determinism, of race, and of the nation. Bertrand Russell called it a "brilliant criticism of state-worship, the prevailing and most noxious superstition of our time." The English edition of his memoirs *The London Years* (London: Robert Anscombe, 1956) is a translation by Joseph Leftwich of that part of Rocker's autobiography describing the period of his life in London. This is underground history, interesting, not only for its account of the anarchist movement and the Jewish



labour movement of the day, but also for his personal reminiscences of some of the great figures of anarchist history, Louise Michel, Errico Malatesta, Kropotkin, Landauer, Nettlau and Francisco Ferrer. Rocker's *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, published by Seeker and Warburg during the Spanish war is a straightforward description of syndicalist aims and methods. *Pioneers of American Freedom* is a study of the Jeffersonian liberal thinkers and the individualist anarchists and radicals in America.<sup>1</sup> *The Six* is a study of great fictional characters like Hamlet and Don Quixote, originating from his wartime lectures in the overcrowded prison ship. Rocker's life of Johann Most has not yet been published in English.

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One final thing must be said about Rocker in the century which has seen the extermination of European Jewry. Four million or five million people – the numbers are so vast that they are meaningless – have been systematically destroyed, not by lunatics – that comforting explanation is too easy – but by ordinary ‘decent’ people like ourselves, model husbands and devoted fathers, conscientious citizens doing their duty. In this appalling century, Rudolf Rocker, Hitler's fellow-countryman, has identified himself with the Jewish people. Of all the *Ohavei Yisroel*, the non-Jewish friends of Jewish culture and aspirations, none had more closely allied himself with the Yiddish-speaking working-class immigrants from Eastern Europe.

Rocker had no religious beliefs; he was no more drawn to Judaism than to the Catholic faith in which he was brought up. Almost by accident he found himself in the East End of London among the poor immigrants who had come, in the eighteen-eighties and ‘nineties, from the narrow and restricted life of the ghettos of Tsarist Russia,

and from persecution and pogroms. He learnt Yiddish, became the editor of newspapers in that language, and translated the classics of West European literature into it, as well as the work of the advanced writers and thinkers of the day. In the face of the hostility of the established English Jewish community, and of the suspicion of the English trade union movement, he organised the first Jewish trade unions in London, and, as the *Jewish Chronicle's* obituary reminded us last week, he was “the man who inspired, organised, and led the great Jewish tailors’ strike in 1912, which brought the end of the sweating system”.

Someone said to me a few years ago with great feeling, “Everything I am I owe to Rocker,” and there are many immigrants of the first generation in America and Canada, and even in the Argentine who would say the same. William Zuckerman, replying once to some racialist arguments appearing in the *American Atlantic Monthly* about the incompatibility of the ‘Occidental Aryan’ and the ‘Oriental Jew’, cited the life of the German *goy* Rudolf Rocker as a refutation and declared:

“His lifetime of service to the Jewish people, his profound understanding of their innermost thoughts, aspirations and hopes, which have raised him to the position of a teacher and leader of Jews, his great sympathy for them which enabled him to acquire their culture and share with them their inner life, as thousands of Jewish friends who love him and whom he loves – all this tells a story not only of a beautiful, selfless life, but also of the ability of civilised man to rise above an inborn prejudice and turn hatred to love.”

But probably the explanation is simpler. It would never have occurred to Rocker to behave in any other way.

**“socialism was not a simple question of a full belly, but a question of culture that would have to enlist the sense of personality and the free initiative of the individual; without freedom it would lead only to a dismal state capitalism...”**

**– Rudolf Rocker**

<sup>1</sup> The top of the page is missing on the scan of this issue and we have added what appears to be missing text. (*Black Flag*)

# Anarchism and Political Action

**Rudolf Rucker**

*Germinal*, December 1906 (*Views & Comments*, October 1958)<sup>1</sup>

The question of political action has been repeatedly discussed in anarchist circles. Nevertheless, we must continually deal with misunderstandings and false interpretations of our position on this point. In reality the anarchists were never opposed to political activity. Since their ideal, anarchism, is a political doctrine. Their criticism has been directed only against a particular kind of political activity. In order to arrive at a clearer conception, it is necessary to define what we mean by political action. We have no objection to "politics" if it is understood in its original, etymological derivation.

The Greek word "polis" means city, community, association. A "politicus" is anyone who is concerned with the public affairs of the "polis." Although a strike is an economic act, it has at the same time a political character because it concerns and influences the life of the "polis." With the development of parliamentarianism and above all parliamentary tactics in the socialist movement, the meaning of "politics" has been limited so that most people think of politics as being only parliamentary action. But parliamentary action is only a particular form of general political action. It is only against this form that the anarchist directs his criticism. Our modern political parties have constricted the whole of political life within the narrow limits of parliaments. It is precisely parliamentary action that Comrade Maryson regards as the most important propaganda tactic for anarchism. Maryson tries to prove that parliamentary action is only a method, a way to reach a certain objective, which has nothing to do with the principles of anarchism. This is an unwarranted assumption. Principles and tactics are interwoven. We can easily understand why social-democrats participate in parliamentary action. There is an organic harmony between them and all other political parties. The social democrat recognises the necessity of government. His opposition is only against the existing form of government.

He is not against the principle of government. This is why he strives always to capture political power. He considers the state as the only creator and defender of social life. He ignores direct action of individuals and

groups and seeks to combat his opponent by the action of his representatives in parliament.

For the anarchist the problem is different. He is an opponent of every government, regardless of the form it takes. His aim is not the conquest, but the abolition of governmental power. He cannot therefore be an agent or representative of governmental power, a wheel in the State chariot. Anarchism bases all its teachings on the free personality and the tactical expression of this teaching is individual initiative and direct action. The forms of Anarchist tactics may vary according to the circumstances and the tactics of our enemies, but the struggle itself will always be a direct one.

As anarchists we know that modern parliamentarianism, the so-called representative system, is only a new form of the old State principle. The place of the dictator is taken by the deputies. The results are the same. It is immaterial if the laws are made and imposed by the will of one hundred, five hundred or a thousand persons. Experience demonstrates that legislation of parliamentary majorities can sometimes be more despotic than that of a personal dictator. If the people in lands ruled by parliaments enjoy more rights and freedoms than in despotic lands, it is not because the government is better, but because the rulers were forced to adapt themselves to the demands of the masses. As soon as the masses become indifferent to the rights which they or their forefathers won through direct action, then even the most democratic government exposes the essentially despotic and reactionary nature common to all governments. It makes little difference who determines the fate of a nation, whether it is an absolute king or a number of deputies. Proudhon was correct when he stated, "Parliament is nothing more than a king with 600 heads." The anarchists want to make it impossible for one, ten, or a hundred people to rule and tyrannise over their subjects and control their thoughts.

In working for the realisation of these ideals we must never forget wherein is found the life source of every authoritarian power. The foundation of every government is not the police, army and other power institutions which protect the state system, but the

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<sup>1</sup> Translated for the October 1958 issue of *Views & Comments*, paper of the US-based Libertarian League. The editors of *Views & Comments* added the introductory notes for this article at the end of the issue's obituary for Rucker: "The following polemical article, which, as far as we know, has never appeared in English, was one of three written in answer to the revisionist ideas of Dr. Maryson, a Jewish anarchist writer of that period. From the Yiddish we translate extracts from that article, which appeared in *Germinal* of Dec. 1906. It illustrates Rucker's early views and it deals with a fundamental problem which has become even more acute with the passing of the years. The best tribute that we can pay to his memory is to make more of his works known to the English speaking public." (*Black Flag*)

ignorance, superstition and the respect of the masses for these institutions. These attitudes must be changed. If we ourselves participate in legislative or executive functions and become part of the mechanics of government, this work will be impossible.

In the past man could not conceive of a world without God. To him the centre of all his feelings and conceptions was God. Upon this blind fanaticism the church built its power. The pioneers of free thought were forced to struggle bitterly and long against the established institutions to overcome the respect of the masses for the church and other agencies. Direct attack was the only way to break the power of the church.

In the period of absolute monarchy, the king was revered almost as God. He and his court were the centre of life. Everything revolved around him and his ministers. At that time a society without a king meant for most people the end of the world. We know how much labour and sacrifice it took to destroy this superstition and to prove to people that the king is only an ordinary man, very often an inferior one at that; that his power rested on the ignorance of his subjects.

Now the great superstition is the worship and belief in the "king with the 600 heads." Parliamentarianism is the most terrible lie of our time. The people expect everything from the state and its laws. Parliament is regarded as the fountain of life. The people cannot conceive of how society can exist without statist executive and legislative institutions. Just as in the past, people could not imagine a world without a God and without a King. The spiritual and cultural nonentities who form parliaments enjoy the same superstitious respect as did the previous nonentities who played the part of anointed despots. The newspapers are full of parliamentary reports as if nothing else existed in the world outside of the few business men and lawyers who regard themselves and are regarded by others as the lords of life. To destroy this superstition is our task. If we were to follow the advice of Dr. Maryson we would not weaken but support and sanction this superstition of the omnipotence of the all powerful parliamentary government, because we ourselves would be taking part in parliamentary action.

Don't tell me that the anarchist deputies would be the opposition to the government. This proves nothing except that the opposition is also a necessary part of the parliamentary system. If there were no opposition it would be necessary to create one. A Parliament without an opposition is impossible and absurd. The fact that we go into a parliament is logical proof that we recognise the moral validity and necessity for this body. We thereby help to perpetuate the belief in the magical powers of parliament. The old saying, "Tell me the company you keep and I will tell you what you are" would also be used against us.

But Comrade Maryson tells us that he is only looking for a platform in parliament. From this tribunal, he can speak to all the people. Should not the anarchists avail themselves of this opportunity? It would be simple. First of all we must agree that it must be done. We nominate in the next election, our candidate, Comrade Yanovsky, (a prominent Jewish anarchist speaker and writer) on the condition that he will not take part in the law-making activity of parliament. He would only protest against bad legislation and make propaganda for anarchism, or better said, state our position as anarchists to all problems discussed in parliament.

The realities of the situation are not so simple, my dear Maryson. If you were to suggest that Yanovsky be sent to some congress or convention to explain our position on some specific problem, no one would object. If Yanovsky would correctly present our position we would certainly be pleased. If he did not, no great harm would be done. No one could force us to accept a decision which we did not agree with. However, the situation takes on a different character when we nominate him for parliament. If Yanovsky should be elected he is no longer on equal footing with us. His election gives him a higher power. He is no longer a delegate but a deputy whose voice and vote have an influence in the making of laws. We have not the slightest guarantee that Yanovsky will do everything we ask him. We would have to depend solely on his personal honesty, strength of purpose, energy and so forth. Should he take an opposite position to ours on this or that problem in parliament, we would not be able to stop him. As a delegate to an ordinary gathering, we would just laugh at him, if he failed to represent us. He could do nothing to us. As deputy his personal will supersedes our joint decision. He could force us to accept his decision because he gives his vote for or against a particular piece of legislation. His personal will becomes a legislative and executive power. This is a fact that we observe every day. We know of social-democratic deputies who voted to send troops to crush striking workers, strengthen the police, accept the budget of a government and so forth. In actual fact you will not find a deputy who always carries out the will of his electors. It is true that you can, in the next elections, pick another deputy if the first one did not carry out your decisions. But firstly, you would not be able to correct the harm done by his predecessor and secondly, you would not have the slightest assurance that the second one would behave better than the first. Perhaps you will answer me that our candidate would after all be an anarchist and not a social-democrat. In this respect I am a sceptic. I do not believe that the name will change the fact. Anarchists are, after all, people and not angels and the fault lies not in whether a deputy calls himself an anarchist or a social-democrat, but in the fact that we ourselves give him the power to regulate our lives. And even if we nominated and elected the best anarchist candidate, it would not do away with the incontestable

fact that we ourselves placed our fate in the hands of another person who will do with our trust what he pleases.

Whether an anarchist can or should participate in parliamentary action I leave to the reader to decide for himself. As far as I am personally concerned, my opinion is that an anarchist could not and should not do this. If he did he would betray his anarchist principles and convictions.

It is not necessary to explain in detail how elections are rigged, especially in America, where politics is nothing more than open buying and selling on the election market. At no other time is so much appeal made to the lowest and dirtiest passions of the mob as in the election period and if a person cannot stoop to sewer politics he will have no influence in the election. Idealism will never get him elected, for idealism and politics are two different things.

Comrade Maryson assures us that he does not want to compromise in any way. His opinion is that the anarchist deputy need never bypass the anarchist principles. But I ask him if he ever earnestly considered the peculiar role that our anarchist would have to play in the chambers of parliament and the kind of speech he would have to deliver to the voters in the electoral campaign? He would have to tell the voters that it is senseless to expect help from parliament, that social problems will not be solved there since parliamentary government, like all other governments, would be the political instrument of the ruling classes whose purpose is to perpetuate the economic and social slavery of the people. He would have to declare that he could do nothing for them and for this he deserves to be elected as deputy in parliament. As an anarchist, he would have to explain that the representative system is nothing more than a new form of political slavery. He would have to explain that no person can represent another. Just as another person cannot eat, drink and sleep for him, so he cannot think and act for him. This is why, dear voter, I ask you not to vote for me or any other candidate.

What impression would such a speech make? The candidate would be looked upon as a political clown who is not in his right mind.

The proposal of Comrade Maryson to use the parliamentary tribune as a propaganda stage is by no means new. This was the original position of the social-democracy. As early as 1887 the congress of the German social-democrats in St. Galen decided that social democratic deputies should not, under any circumstances, take part in the making of laws and should limit themselves to criticising and making socialist propaganda. What was the result? Other parties charged that the social-democrats criticise others but do

nothing practical or constructive. The social democrats gradually relaxed their original rule and collaborated with other deputies on practical measures, because they did not want to lose influence with the voters. This is understandable. Placed in a similar position, the anarchists would have to do the same. It is not the name but the thing itself which produces definite effects, and even the best intentions of Comrade Maryson would not be able to halt or reverse the process.

Comrade Maryson stresses the great propaganda success which the social-democrats made by parliamentary activity. The question is, how we understand the word success. If success is measured by the number of votes, then the social-democrats have been successful. As a social-democratic party, its success is null and void, for the greater the number of votes it won, the weaker its original socialist principles became. In Germany there are three million social-democratic voters, but how many

real socialists will you find among them? You have in Germany 80 daily social-democratic newspapers. If you would not read the line "Social-Democratic Organ" you would never suspect, from their contents, that they are socialist papers. Only the theoretical organ of the party, "Die Neue Ziet," edited by Karl Kautsky, carries from time to time socialist discussion and articles. Although its price is low, it has only seven thousand readers out of three million voters and is always in debt. Bakunin knew what he was talking about when he admonished his Marxist opponents, "You want to conquer political power, but I am much afraid that political power will conquer your socialism." If it were not for the anarchists, socialism would be completely submerged in the swamp of parliamentary action.

**The question is, how we understand the word success. If success is measured by the number of votes, then the social-democrats have been successful. As a social-democratic party, its success is null and void, for the greater the number of votes it won, the weaker its original socialist principles became.**

Is the parliamentary tribunal really the only place from which we can speak to the people and give our movement a practical importance? I think not. The majority of the people are not interested in politics. The number of those who take the trouble to read the parliamentary reports are very few. Parliament is but the political stock exchange of the ruling classes. This is why the agenda carries the stamp of those classes.

I do not understand how it is that Comrade Maryson comes with his proposal at this time when anarchism is making good progress in most of the European countries. In France we have the revolutionary labour movement whose aims and tactics are closely linked with anarchist demands. They are against the wage system and against every government. They advocate the autonomy of the communes and declare that it is the great historic mission of the unions to organise the coming communistic production and the political administration of every commune. They are anti-

parliamentarian and for direct action. Their most important and effective propagandists are outspoken anarchists who influence the entire French labour movement. The same is true in French Switzerland, Italy, Holland and Belgium, to say nothing of Spain, whose labour movement had from the outset an anarchist character. Here is our place, in the union, among the people. Here is the field for our activity, where our words will not be lost.

It is not true, Comrade Maryson, that only through parliament is it possible to interest the people. Here is an example from the history of the first "International Workingmen's Association." This powerful organisation had within a short time united two million workers in its ranks, despite the fact that it rejected parliamentary action. Later, when Marx and Engels tried to introduce parliamentary action there came the split, and the International went under.

# **The History of Parliamentary Action in the Modern Labour Movement**

**Rudolf Rucker**

*Freedom*, January 1920

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of July, 1870. Karl Marx wrote to Frederick Engels the following characteristic words:

The French need a thrashing. If Prussia is victorious, then State-power will be centralised, thus centralising the German working class. German preponderance will shift the centre of the West-European Labour movement from France to Germany, and one has only to compare the movement from 1866 till today in both countries in order to perceive that the German working class is superior to the French in theory and in organisation. Its preponderance over the French in the world-theatre would at the same time mean the preponderance of our theory over the one of Proudhon, etc.

Marx was right. The victory of Germany over France meant indeed a turning point in the history of European Labour movements. The libertarian and revolutionary Socialism of the proletariat of the Latin countries was pushed into the background by the new situation and forced to clear the field for the authoritarian and anti-libertarian theories of Marxism. The living, creating and unlimited development of Socialism had to give way to a petrified dogmatism, which pretentiously came forward as a new science, but which in reality is nothing else than a tissue of theological subtleties and fatalistic sophisms which dig the grave for every truly Socialist thought. And with the ideas were changed the methods of the Labour movement. Instead of the Socialist

propaganda groups and economic fighting organisations in which the Socialists of the "Internationale" saw the germs of the future society, the natural organs for the socialisation of the means of life, now started the era of the Socialist-Labour parties and the Parliamentary representation of the proletariat. The old Socialist education, which spoke to the workers of the conquest of land, factories and workshops, was gradually forgotten and had to give way to the discipline of the party, which saw in the conquest of political power its noblest and highest ideal.

Michael Bakunin, the great opponent of Marx, perceived the changed position with a clear view and understood with a heavy direct heart that after the victory of Germany and after the terrible defeat of the Paris Commune a new chapter in the history of Europe had begun. Physically entirely broken and scenting death, which was very close on him, he wrote on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, 1874, to Orgajow the following significant words: Bismarckism – i.e., militarism, police regime and finance monopolies, united in a system which carries the name of the new Statedom – is conquering everywhere. Perhaps ten or fifteen years will pass in which this mighty and scientific abnegation of humanity will be victorious." Bakunin was mistaken in the length of time and was unable to guess that nearly half a century would pass before "Bismarckism" would be defeated, and that it would end in a gruesome world catastrophe.

Whilst the victory of Germany in 1871 and the terrible overthrow of the Paris Commune were the prologue to the decline of the old “Internationale,” so the Great War of 1914 was to peal the death-knell of political Socialism. . . .

And here we encounter a curious phenomenon which appears sometimes really grotesque, and can only be explained by the great lack of knowledge of the history of the old Socialist movement. Bolsheviki, Independents, Communists and others never tire of accusing the leaders of the old Social Democracy of blackest treason to the principles of Marxism.<sup>1</sup> They accuse them of having suffocated the Socialist movement in the morass of bourgeois parliamentarism and of wrongly interpreting the position of Marx and Engels towards the State, etc.

The intellectual leader of Bolshevism, N. Lenin, has attempted to give these accusations a firm foundation by the publication of his well-known book, “State and Revolution, which is looked upon by his disciples, especially in Germany, as the revelation of unadulterated Marxism. By industriously collecting a mass of extracts from the writings of Marx and Engels, Lenin tries to prove that the “two founders of scientific Socialism” were always pronounced opponents of democracy and Parliamentary “morass-politics,” and that all their efforts were directed towards the abolition of the State.

Now one must not forget that Lenin made this discovery only when his party, contrary to all expectation, found itself in the minority after the elections for the Constituent Assembly. Until then the Bolsheviki had taken part in elections, like all other parties, and anxiously avoided coming into conflict with the principles of democracy. In the last elections to the Russian Constituent Assembly, which they initiated with a grandiose program, they had hoped to get an overwhelming majority. But when in spite of all this

they remained in the minority, they declared war on democracy and dissolved the Constituent Assembly. And then Lenin issued his work on “State and Revolution” as a kind of justification.

Lenin’s task was by no means easy, he was forced to make far-reaching concessions to the anti-State

tendencies of the Anarchists, whilst at the same time he had to seek for proof that his action was by no means Anarchism but undiluted Marxism. The result was therefore that his work abounds with errors which sometimes turn sound logic upside down. The following is one example: In order to bring the anti-State tendency of Marx into the limelight. Lenin cites the well-known passage from Marx’s “Civil War in France,” where Marx expresses his satisfaction with the

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Commune because it had begun to eradicate the parasite State root and branch. But Lenin forgets to mention that Marx with this quotation, which is in crying opposition to his whole previous position on this question, was compelled by circumstances to make a concession to his Bakuninist opponents, with whom he was then in a keen fight. Even Franz Mehring, whom one cannot accuse of any sympathy with the Majority Socialists, had to admit this contradiction. He says in his last work, “Karl Marx: History of his Life”: “As ingenious as this work is in detail, the ideas nevertheless stood in a certain contradiction with the opinions which Marx and Engels had expressed for a quarter of a century, and which they had already proclaimed in the ‘Communist Manifesto.’”

But Bakunin was entirely right when he wrote at the time: “The impression of the rising of the Commune was so forceful that even the Marxists, whose ideas had all been thrown into a heap by this revolution, were compelled to raise their hats to the Commune. They did even more: in contradiction to all logic and their own innermost feelings, they made the program of the Commune and their own goal identical. It was a comical

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<sup>1</sup> A reference to: the Russian Bolsheviks, the “majority” faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (the party was always smaller than the Menshevik – “minority” – faction until 1917, the “majority” refers to a resolutions passed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Party Congress in 1903. It renamed itself the Communist Party in 1918 to distance itself from the Social Democrats; Independents refers to the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany, an anti-war split from the Social Democratic Party in 1917. It split over in 1920 over affiliation to the Communist International, with 400,000

members joining the German Communist Party in December 1920; Communist probably refers to the anti-parliamentarian Marxists in the German Communist Party. In April 1920, the party split over following Russian demands to stand for election and work in the Social Democratic trade unions, forming the Communist Workers’ Party of Germany. Attempts to affiliate to the Communist International failed and the group eventually came to recognise the state-capitalist nature of Bolshevism and its regime. (*Black Flag*)

but forced travesty. They had to make it, or they would have been repelled and left by everybody, so powerful was the emotion which this revolution had created in the whole world.”

What Lenin forgets to mention in his work, although it is for the question at issue of decisive importance, is the fact that it was Marx and Engels who tried to force Parliamentary activity on the organisations of the old International, and thus were the direct cause of the general stagnation of the Socialist-Labour movement in bourgeois Parliamentarism. The International was the first great attempt to unite the organised workers of all countries in one great bond, as far as it recognised the final goal as the economic liberation of the workers. But as the ideas and methods of the different branches varied, it was of importance to lay down the grand uniting points as guiding lines and to recognise the autonomy and independent activity of the various sections. As long as this was the case the International flourished with wonderful power in all countries. But the case soon altered when Marx and Engels attempted to force Parliamentary activity on the various separate national federations. This was first done at the disastrous London Conference in the year 1871. where both had a resolution adopted which finished with the following words:

Considering that against the collective force of the property-owning classes the proletariat as a class can only stand if it constitutes itself a separate political party in opposition to all parties of the propertied classes; that this constitution of the proletariat as a political party is necessary in order to secure the triumph of the Social Revolution and its final goal – the abolition of the classes; that the unification of the powers of the proletariat, accomplished already through the economic struggles, must also serve as a lever for the mass of this class in its struggle against the political power of its exploiters; reminds the Conference, the members of the International, that in the struggle of the working class their economic and political activities are inseparably bound together.

Had any single section or federation of the International adopted such a resolution, they would have had a perfect right to do so, because it involved nobody else; but when the General Executive forced such a resolution as binding on all members of the International, despite the fact that the question had not been brought before a General Congress, their arbitrary action, which stood in direct opposition to the spirit of the International, was bound to arouse the energetic opposition of all libertarian and revolutionary elements.

The infamous Congress at the Hague in 1872 crowned the work undertaken by Marx and Engels to transform the International into an election machine by a special

resolution, which made it compulsory for the different sections of the International to strive for the capture of political power. Thus was the open split in the International, with all its fatal consequences for the Labour movement, directly provoked by Marx and Engels, and the period of Parliamentary activity commenced for the Socialist movement, which unavoidably led into a morass and to the degeneration of Socialism.

When in 1873 the revolution broke out in Spain, the members of the International, who were Anarchists almost to a man, ignored the bourgeois panties and went their own way to bring about the expropriation of the land and the means of production in the spirit of the social revolution. General strikes and insurrections broke out in Alcoy, San Lucar, Barameda, Sevilla, Cartagena and other places, but they were bloodily suppressed. The longest to hold out was the naval harbour town Cartagena, which for several months was in the hands of the rebels, until it fell finally with the help of Prussian and British warships. On this occasion Engels, in the “Volksstaat” attacked the Spanish Bakuninists severely, and reproached them for not having joined with the bourgeois Republicans. How would the same Engels, if he were still alive, have criticised (the position of his Bolshevist and Communist disciples in Russia and Germany?

After the Congress of Erfurt in 1891, when the leaders of the so-called “Jungen” (young ones) were expelled from the Social Democratic party because they had raised the very same accusations which today Lenin is raising against the opportunists” and “Kautskyans, “ the oppositional elements founded their own party, which had as their organ the Berlin *Sozialist*. This movement was at the start dogmatically Marxian and represented ideas which were almost identical with the present Communist Party. If one reads, for instance, the book of Teistler, “Parliamentarism and the Proletariat,” one finds the very same ideas as in Lenin’s work, “State and Revolution.” Like the Russian Bolsheviks and the members of the Communist Party of Germany, the “Independent Socialists” of that time rejected democracy and refused to take part in bourgeois Parliaments on the grounds of Marxian principles.

And how did Engels speak about these “young ones,” who, like the “Communists” of today, were accusing the Social Democratic party leaders of treason against Marxism? In a letter to Sorge, dated 24<sup>th</sup> of October, 1891, old Engels made the following loving remarks: “The most contemptible Berliners, instead of being the accusers, went straight away into the dock and acted as miserable cowards and were compelled to work outside the party if they wanted to do anything. There are undoubtedly police spies amongst them, also disguised Anarchists who are out to do quiet propaganda amongst our people; side by side with the former there are asses, conceited students, failures and arrogant coxcombs of

all kinds. All in all, hardly 200 people.” One wonders with what caressing adjectives Engels would today stamp our “Communists,” who styled themselves the “grave watchers” of the principles of Marxism. . . .

It is impossible to characterise the methods of the old Social Democracy [with reference to the methods advocated by Marx and Engels]. Of these things Lenin doesn’t mention a word, and his German friends still less. Our Majority Socialists have only to recall these things in order to prove that they are the true

representatives of Marxism. And anyone who knows history must say that they are right. It was Marxism which initiated the Parliamentary activity of the working class and which moulded the internal development of the German Social Democratic Party. Only when our “Communist” friends of today realise this will they see that the way of social liberation leads not through but over Marxism into the happy land of Socialism.

*(Der Freie Arbeiter, August, 1919)*

# The History of Parliamentary Action in the Modern Labour Movement

**Rudolf Rocker**

*Freedom, November-December 1924*

One has by now become quite accustomed here in Germany to confine the term “political action” to the narrow frame of Parliamentary activity. For this reason one need not wonder that today Anarchists and Syndicalists are being accused from all sides that they are opponents of the political struggle and are out to divorce economic action from political action. Not only from the camp of the old Social Democracy does this cry emanate: the spiritual lights of the so-called Communists, whose knowledge of our movement has certainly not been acquired by a study of it, are again blowing the old trumpet, and it is really touching how the hostile brothers in the general headquarters of authoritarian Socialism find each other again with lightning speed when the occasion arises to have a smack at the hated Anarchists and Syndicalists. When one, therefore, touches the question of Parliamentary action, it is necessary to state clearly our position towards political action in order to avoid misunderstandings.

Of a political nature is every event which has an influence on the progress and development of the community, even if it takes place exclusively on the economic field. Every large economic action, as for instance a general strike, is at the same time a political action of a very eminent significance, because it influences the “total mechanism” of the community in a greater degree than any other action. Parliamentary activity must be looked upon as only a part of the

general political action, and in our opinion it only represents the most insignificant and weakest part of the political struggle. Anarchists and Syndicalists reject on principle every form of Parliamentary activity, because they are of the opinion that the interests of the bourgeoisie as a class are diametrically opposed to the interests of the proletariat, so that every compromise on the field of bourgeois Parliamentarism is not only useless, but directly detrimental to the workers, in so far as it turns the class struggle into an undignified comedy, and because it has a paralysing effect on the revolutionary energy and initiative of the masses. Not even the most generous franchise can alter this fact and all talk of “Democracy” is moonshine, for political freedom without economic equality is a lie and self-deception.

But our position towards bourgeois Parliamentarism must not by any means be regarded as a rejection of the political struggle in general. Such a position would be absurd, for does not the smallest wages dispute show that every time the least danger arises to the employing class, the State rushes to the spot in order to defend the threatened interest of the owners.

While history teaches us that the State owes its origin to the development of private property and social class distinction, so our daily experience shows us that the

**Whoever is therefore in earnest in the struggle against capitalism is forced by the iron logic of circumstances to fight the modern State, as the defender and guardian of the capitalist system. The struggle against the “exploitation of man by man” leads with forced necessity to the struggle against the “ruling of man by man.”**



State, once in existence, is the most efficient, and most unscrupulous defender of monopoly and class rule, and that consequently the struggle against capitalism includes as a matter of necessity the struggle against the State and its supporters. Every radical alteration of the economic conditions of life is unavoidably bound up with a change of the political system. Just as the absolute monarchy was the natural reflex of the old feudal system, so is the Parliamentary form of government the result of the capitalist order of society. Whoever is therefore in earnest in the struggle against capitalism is forced by the iron logic of circumstances to fight the modern State, as the defender and guardian of the capitalist system. The struggle against the “exploitation of man by man” leads with forced necessity to the struggle against the “ruling of man by man.” Therefore, for every libertarian Socialist the abolition of private monopoly is equivalent to the abolition of the State. If the socialisation of the land and the means of production are the economic goal of his desires, so is his political goal a condition when – to quote Saint-Simon – “the art of ruling people” will be replaced by “the art of administering things.”

In this struggle we consider, besides the education of the masses, the use of the economic strength which the working class have in their hands as the most effective weapon. Under the influence of Anarchist ideas and the Syndicalist movement, the working class, especially of the Latin countries and Russia, have got used to applying the general strike more and more, not only as a means of obtaining economic concessions, but also as a political weapon to wrest from the State certain concessions. We only mention the general strike of the workers of Spain in 1904, for the purpose of obtaining the release of political prisoners, and the gigantic general strike movement of the Russian proletariat in 1905 which pressed the pen into the hand of the Tsar and forced him to sign the Constitution. Also the anti-militarist propaganda which has been carried out by the Anarchists and Syndicalists, and which has entailed colossal sacrifices, belongs to the realm of political action.

The difference between the State politics of Social Democracy, with its different wings, and the anti-State politics of the Anarchists and Syndicalists, has been pronounced by James Guillaume, the delegate of the old Jura Federation, at the infamous Hague Congress in 1872, in the following classic words: “We are by no means disciples of the political indifference with which we are falsely accused. But in opposition to the Marxists we are negative politicians, inasmuch as we have made not the capturing but the destruction of any and every political power our goal.”

The Socialist movements prior to the foundation of the International Working Men’s Association were, with the exception of the Babouvists and the followers of Louis Blanc, antagonistic to party politics of any

description. They regarded Socialism as a question of culture, and appealed principally to the reasoning faculties of their contemporaries in order to make them receptive for the new gospel. For this reason they expected nothing from the State and the political parties, and they foresaw the realisation of Socialism only on the roads of direct action and practical experimentation.

One must also bear in mind that the Socialists of the pre-’48 period lived under the immediate influence of the great French Revolution and its social consequences, and felt, therefore, much more intensively than we, who are only able to see that great historic drama from a more remote perspective, the unmeasured over-valuation of State political action, by which the new democracy, personified in Jacobinism, was held. Saint Simon, in his “Critical remarks about the political parties of the great Revolution,” tells them that they laid too much weight on the political transformation of the State and that they had too little understanding of far-reaching and fruitful economic reforms. Charles Fourier, the genial founder of the “Societarian School, criticises Jacobinism and its successors in a similar way; the same attitude was taken up by the followers of Lerroux, Cabet, Buchez, to speak only of the principal Socialist movements of that time.

Proudhon, who had grasped the essence of the State better than most of his Socialist contemporaries, recognised clearly and plainly the real significance of all State politics. He was perfectly clear about the character of political parties, and was firmly convinced of their insufficiency and their inability to solve the economic problems of the time. For this reason he warned the Socialists not to lose themselves in the stream of State politics, and told them that Socialism, once it fell into the hands of any Government, was doomed to inevitable reaction. Also the old English Socialists could not be friends with what one nowadays calls politics. William Godwin, the first theoretician of Anarchism, in his admirable work, “Enquiry concerning Political Justice and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness” criticised the State and the political parties in the same manner as fifty years later did Proudhon. Also Robert Owen, the most influential of all English Socialists, and his numerous followers were very sceptical as to political action. Owen made against the Chartists, who through great mass demonstrations attempted to obtain universal suffrage, the same reproach as did Saint-Simon against the men of the French Revolution: he accused them of wasting too much energy on politics and of showing too little understanding of and energy for economic problems.

The only movements which were entirely saturated by the ideas of Jacobinism, which regarded central State-power as a means to decree Socialism from above to the people, were the Babouvists and the school of Louis Blanc. The former, who had united a great number of

energetic elements, ready for any sacrifice, in their secret organisation, were the faithful followers of the Communist Gracchus Babouf, who sacrificed his life for his ideas; and, like him, they believed it possible to overthrow the Government by an audacious attack, in order to declare the establishment of Communism from above through the appointment of a Committee of Public Welfare. The idea of the Dictatorship, which has really nothing in common with Socialism, and which originated in the narrow bourgeois idea-circle of Jacobinism, formed an iron pillar of the Babouvist movement, and found in men like Blanqui and Barbes passionate and forceful defenders. Marx and Engels later took over from them the idea of the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat," under which nomenclature nothing else is to be understood than a Government invested with dictatorial powers, whose aim is to work for and to enforce Socialism by a display of legal power.

Louis Blanc, who was just as strict a Jacobin as Blanqui and the other leaders of the Babouvist movement, differed from these only by his methods. He rejected on principle the tactics of insurrection, but was also of the opinion that Socialism could only be established with the help of central State-power. Louis Blanc misunderstood entirely the deep difference between "State" and "society," and fought, energetically against all libertarian social movements, which grouped themselves principally around Proudhon. Blanc says, for instance:

"To demand the suppression of the State means the same as to demand the liquidation of Society as such, it means to desire that there should always be oppressors and oppressed, rich and poor, it means to enthrone tyranny in the midst of general confusion, it means not only to leave the path of Socialism, but to proclaim Individualism and to work directly for the destruction of liberty."

In his paper, *Revue du Progrès*, founded in 1839, Louis Blanc defended the point of view that Socialism could only be enforced by a democratic Government, and that therefore the conquest of political power would be the first task, in order to hand over to the people the weapon of legislation. Yet all the time he laid stress on the fact that the political struggle had to be subordinated to economic and social liberation; that the latter was to be regarded as the goal and the former only the means towards this goal. After the conquest of political power by the workers, the State was to suppress the capitalist organism, which was to be replaced by national workshops, in which the entire production was to be organised under the management and control of the State.

Louis Blanc was the real initiator of Parliamentary activity in the Labour movement, and his ideas found a certain echo in the ranks of the first Socialists of Belgium, Spain, and Switzerland. Also Ferdinand Lasalle, who was as strong a believer in the State as Blanc, and who was strongly influenced by the latter, saw in the conquest of universal direct suffrage the most important and noblest problem of the German working class, and demanded the establishment of Co-operative Associations, to whom the State should grant unlimited credit.

After the *coup d'état* of Napoleon III in 1851, and under the general reaction which set in all over Europe, most of the old Socialist movements disappeared from the scene; their numerous publications were to a great extent destroyed and their ideas forgotten. The only two movements which weathered the storm were the Mutualists, as the followers of Proudhon called themselves, and the Blanquists. Only in the lessons of the "International Working Men's Association" was the question of the Parliamentary participation of the proletariat destined to be of decisive importance.

(Translated from *Der Freie Arbeiter*)

## The True Nature of the State

**Rudolf Rocker**

*Freedom*, October 1926

Some months before the October Revolution of 1917 Lenin wrote his well-known work, "The State and Revolution," which exhibits a singular mixture of Marxist and seemingly Anarchistic philosophy. Therein, by a careful selection of materials, Lenin seeks to make out that Marx and Engels always stood for the abolition of the State, and that they wished to make use of it only during the transition period of the Revolution. At the

same time he attacks in the sharpest manner Kautsky, Plekhanov, and the so-called "Opportunists" of modern Marxism, and upbraids them for having deliberately falsified Marx's teachings by withholding from the workers the ideas he and Engels held respecting the duration of the Proletarian Dictatorship.<sup>1</sup> Our present task is not to subject to serious criticism Lenin's affirmations, although it would be easy to produce

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Johann Kautsky (1854-1938) was a leading Marxist journalist and theoretician before the outbreak of World War I in 1914. He was considered as being amongst the most authoritative popularisers of Orthodox Marxism after the death of Friedrich Engels in 1895; Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov

(1856-1918) was a leading Russian Marxist theoretician. He supported the Bolshevik faction at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in 1903, then became a leading Menshevik. (*Black Flag*)

citations from his own works, and from those of Marx and Engels which prove exactly the opposite of what he says. Commentaries of that character are usually of trifling importance, inasmuch as in the end it is not a question of whether this and that one said or wrote this or that at some time of his life, but of whether his sayings have been confirmed or contradicted by practical experience. Everything else has just as little worth as have our theologians' subtle commentaries on the Revelations of St. John.

In "The State and Revolution" Lenin expressly explains that the difference between the Marxists and the Anarchists lies in the fact "the former have set as their goal the complete abolition of the State, but that this, in their judgment, can be obtained only through a Socialist Revolution which will abolish classes, the adoption of Socialism leading to the death of the State; while the Anarchists want the State abolished entirely between today and tomorrow, and have no comprehension of the conditions needed to bring about its abolition."

This explanation in its day caused quite a number of Anarchists to regard Lenin and his party as near comrades. Many indeed went so far as to accept, as being all in the bargain, the famous "Dictatorship of the Proletariat," as it was presumably only for a transition period and could not, in the interest of the Revolution, be evaded. Apparently it was not understood that the great danger lay in the thought that during the transition period the Dictatorship was an unavoidable necessity.

History recognises no transition periods, but simply comparatively primitive and high forms of development. Every new order of society is in its original forms of expression naturally primitive and defective. Nevertheless the scheme of its future development, and all the possibilities inherent in the unfolding that has yet to come, must have been already embodied in its new-shaped institutions, just as the entire animal, or the entire plant, exists already in embryo. Every attempt to incorporate in a new order of things the essential ingredients of an old, broken-down society has resulted hitherto either in the new development being frustrated at the start or in the tender germs of the new being so enmeshed in the rigid forms of the old that their natural unfolding is checked and they gradually die away.

To maintain that the State will be necessary until classes have been abolished requires a very queer sort of logic. As if the State had not been always the creator of new privileged classes, and had not incorporated in the very essence of its being the eternalising of class distinctions! This irrefutable truth, which history has

confirmed time and time again, has once more been so established by the Bolshevik experiment in Russia that one must be smitten with incurable blindness if one cannot see the enormous import of this latest teaching.

Under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat there has developed in the Russia of today a new ruling class, the Commissar Aristocracy, and this the masses are finding quite as much of an oppressor as were the administrators of the old regime. This new class gets its parasitic living in the same way as did its predecessors. It monopolises the best residences and is well looked after in all respects, while the masses suffer from lack

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of everything. So this new class has to an absurd degree, all the tyrannical habits of those formerly in power, and it weighs on the country like a nightmare. A new and most characteristic word has come into the common people's speech – "Soviet-bourgeois." This expression, today common in workers' circles, shows clearly and distinctly the people's feeling toward this new ruling caste now governing in its name.

In view of these cruel facts Lenin's declaration that the State must continue to exist until classes have been abolished sounds like a bad joke. No; the reality is quite otherwise. The State's entire machinery of power is merely for the creation of new privileges and the defence of old ones, This is its very essence, the whole substance of its being, whether its character be outspokenly civilian or whether it writes on its shop-sign the words "Dictatorship of the Proletariat." One cannot gather grapes from thistles, and just as little can one transform a weapon for the maintenance of class-rulership and monopoly into a weapon for the freeing of the people.

In his brilliant essay on "The Modern State" Kropotkin makes the following profound remarks:

"He who demands of any institution representing a historical structure that it shall serve to destroy the privileges it has itself developed shows thereby his incapacity to understand what a historical structure means to

the life of a society. He fails to grasp the basic law of all organic development, namely, that new functions call for new organs, and that these must build themselves.”<sup>1</sup>

These words embody one of Life’s deepest truths, and touch one of the gravest, infirmities from which the culture of our times is suffering.

Institutions occupy the same place in a society as do organs in the body of an animal or plant. They are the organs of the social body. Organs do not come into being arbitrarily, but in accordance with the set needs of the environment. The eye of a deep-sea fish is shaped differently from that of a land animal, for it has different duties to perform. Altered life-conditions produce altered organs. But always an organ fulfils only a certain determined function, and when the organism no longer requires the activity of that function the organ gradually dies and becomes rudimentary. Never, however, does an organ undertake a function alien to its essential being.

So it is with social institutions. They also do not come into existence arbitrarily but make their appearance in response to definite social needs and for the attainment of definite ends. It was thus, for example, that the Modern State developed, after the division into classes and the monopolisation of industry had reached an advanced stage. The new possessing classes needed an instrument of power which would maintain their industrial and social privileges as against the working masses. *The Modern State came into existence, and developed, essentially as the organ of the privileged classes for the holding-down and suppression of the masses.*

This is the task that constitutes the essence of its being; the one cause for its existence. To this task the State has always remained true, and must remain true, for it cannot get out of its skin. Its forms have changed in the course of social evolution, but its task has always been the same. In fact, it has continually broadened its activities in proportion as it has subjected to its might new branches of social life. Whether it calls itself a Republic or a Monarchy, whether it is organised on the basis of a Constitution or on that of an Autocracy, its historic mission remains unchanged.

Just as little as a man can alter arbitrarily the functions of an organ in the body of an animal or plant, or see with his ears or hear with his eyes because he wishes to, just so little is it possible to convert an instrument for suppression into one for freeing the oppressed. The State can be only what it is – a defender of privilege and mass exploitation, the creator of new classes and new monopolies. He who does not recognise this as being

the role of the State has no grasp of the realities of our social order, and is incapable of showing mankind the new horizons of its evolution.

The Bolsheviks, when they introduced into Russia the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, did not merely take over the State apparatus of the old society. They actually equipped it with such absolute powers as no other Government in the world has yet exhibited. They have handed over to it every department of public life and, at first, actually committed to it the whole organisation of industry. Ruthlessly they have suppressed all and everything that stood in their way, and, depriving the masses of all right to express their thoughts and feelings, have created the most formidable bureaucracy the world has seen. The celebrated words of the French Jacobin, Saint Just, that it is the lawmaker’s task to commandeer private conscience and teach the citizen to think as does the State, have never been put into force on such a scale and so realistically as in Russia under the so-called Dictatorship of the Proletariat, which has always been nothing but a Dictatorship *over* the Proletariat and the people at large.

In his well-known “Bourgeois Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship” Lenin has attempted to justify the suppression of freedom of assembly in Russia by reference to the great revolutions in England and France, where the monarchical elements were not allowed to meet in public and give expression to their views. But this argument is merely a sophistical veiling of the actual facts. In England and France the young Republics were in a life or death struggle with their monarchical adversaries. So long as it was a question of the most elementary self-defence, of to be or not to be, the course of the revolutionists is not merely comprehensible but is also justified morally. When however, later on, under the Dictatorships of Cromwell and Robespierre, brute force was raised into a system, it operated as has every other tyranny and with corresponding consequences. In Russia, on the other hand, the suppressed were not merely those who had carried on the old regime but also all those of revolutionary and Socialist tendencies who had helped to overthrow the Autocracy and risked their blood and lives by opposing counter-revolutionary attempts. There comes in the great distinction, and on it Lenin naturally was silent.

When Lenin further declares that the so-called freedom of the press in democratic countries must remain a sham so long as the best printing establishments and the largest stocks of paper are in the hands of the capitalists, he dodges facts. In Soviet Russia conditions for the revolutionary and Socialist press are a thousand times worse than they are in any capitalistic country. In other

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<sup>1</sup> “The Modern State” was the fourth part of Kropotkin’s final book, *La Science moderne et l’anarchie* (Paris: Stock, 1913). It was translated into German and issued as a pamphlet long

before appearing in English. A different translation of this passage can be found on page 352 of *Modern Science and Anarchy* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press 2018). (*Black Flag*)

countries the capitalists have at their disposal the best printing establishments and the largest stocks of paper, as Lenin very truly remarks; but in Russia the State commands all the printing establishments and all the paper, and is consequently in a position to suppress every opinion unpleasant to it. To that point it has come. In capitalist countries the free expression of opinion by word of mouth and in writing is naturally much

circumscribed, but in Russia, under the so-called Dictatorship of the Proletariat, it does not exist at all.

What is the outcome of all this? A complete failure on the part of the Dictatorship to pave the way for a new industrial system and practical realisation of Socialism – a hopeless capitulation to that very Capitalism it pretended itself eager to destroy.

# “Proletarian Dictatorship” and Counter-Revolution

**Rudolf Rocker**

*Freedom*, June 1927

Those who have been carefully and without prejudice observing the inner development of the Soviet Government of Russia have realised long ago that the Communist Parties abroad were being used by the Russian Government merely as a means to further its foreign policies. The Communist membership at large did not understand this, of course, and many of them refuse to believe it even today, blinded by their unthinking fanaticism, no matter how evident the situation has become through recent events. It is just this blind faith of the masses that is the most tragic part of the whole matter.

Some time ago the *Manchester Guardian* published sensational exposures concerning the secret relations between the Soviet Government and the German Army – exposures that produced the effect of a bomb in Germany and threw a glaring light upon a situation the worst of which could not even be imagined.

The *Manchester Guardian* asserted at the time that the German Junker combine had built a flying machine factory in Russia where military aeroplanes were to be manufactured for German and Russian use; that representatives of the Russian and German armies had agreed to build poison-gas factories in Russia; that this work had begun five years ago and was being continued; that officers of the German Army frequently travelled to Russia and back, provided with false passports which the Soviet Government was supplying with visa for them; that the Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, General von Seeckt, stood on the best terms with high officers of the Red Army in Russia; and that a number of Russian ships, laden with arms and munitions for the German

Army, arrived in the German harbour of Stettin and were unloaded there.

These statements of the *Manchester Guardian* were so definite and detailed that they necessarily attracted immediate attention, the more so as the German Army is admittedly thoroughly monarchistic and its chiefs closely connected with militant reactionary organisations, as has repeatedly been proven in various trials. A secret alliance of such elements – the German Army and the reactionary Putsch bodies – with the Russian dictators, who pretend to be the champions of the proletarian world-revolution – that was certainly a most peculiar and interesting situation.

The German Government at first attempted a very weak and vague denial.

Thereupon the *Manchester Guardian* came out with additional evidence, which brought still more confusion to those involved. If it had been the Daily Mail instead

of the *Manchester Guardian*, the whole matter could have been dismissed as mere Chauvinistic humbug. But the *Manchester Guardian* had always favoured a friendly attitude toward Germany; in its exposures it also sought to shield the German Government, speaking of the secret agreement between Moscow and the German Army as having been made without the knowledge of the German Government.

The entire Nationalistic and Communistic press of Germany at first denounced the statements of the *Manchester Guardian* as a conscious, deliberate lie.

**A secret alliance of such elements – the German Army and the reactionary Putsch bodies – with the Russian dictators, who pretend to be the champions of the proletarian world-revolution – that was certainly a most peculiar and interesting situation.**

But the official organs of Russia were silent: they tried to ignore the matter, though public opinion everywhere was greatly aroused over it. Yet, soon compelled to speak up, the Soviet newspapers avoided an open statement, resorting instead to verbal quibbling and half-admissions which only served to make the *Guardian* charges more credible.

Thus Bukharin declared to the session of the Communist Party in Moscow:

“We don’t make a secret of it, and we never did, that we have entered into an agreement with the Junkers’ firm, that aeroplanes are being manufactured, and have been manufactured for some time. We say frankly that we shall not refuse an order from any Government to build aeroplanes in Russia for it, or to supply it with other ammunition necessary for the defence of its country, provided it pays us for the work.”

Bukharin made an effort to be very careful in his speech, but for all that his confession was enough to open the eyes of any intelligent man. Bukharin ignored the intimate relationship between General von Seeckt and high officers of the Red Army; likewise he did not refer to the false passports, visaed by Russia, used by officers of the German Army to travel back and forth to Russia in order to hold consultations with Soviet Army chiefs. But he admitted that the Russian Government was supplying the German Army with arms and ammunition, according to the contracts the Soviet regime had made with the Junkers firm.

These contracts began in 1921-1922, at the very time when the Communist Party of Germany was organising armed uprisings in Saxony, Thüringen, Hamburg, and other places. All the blood of the German workers by the German Army, to whom the Bolshevik Government was supplying arms and ammunition at the time. What terrible treachery, the like of which history does not record! Proletarians shot by German soldiers with bullets supplied by the “Proletarian Dictatorship” of Soviet Russia! Many of the workers maimed and arrested during those uprisings are still languishing in German prisons, while Bukharin assures his followers that his Government will continue to give arms and bullets to the Germany Army.

When the truth of the *Manchester Guardian* exposures became quite evident, the *Rote Fahne*, the central organ of the Communist Party of Germany, still continued to deny the facts. Thereupon the Berlin *Vorwärts* printed a facsimile of a document from the files of the ammunitions bureau of the German Army Ministry. That official document was an order on the Darmstadt

National Bank to remit \$50,000 by wire to the Prombank in Moscow, through the medium of the New York Equitable Trust Company. The important document, duly signed and sealed, was dated November 9, 1926, and its genuineness was never called in question.

More: the Socialist Künstler published statements from German workingmen employed in the Bersol factory, in the city of Troitzk, Russia, testifying to the fact that they had been manufacturing there poison gas for the German Army.<sup>1</sup> Künstler followed this with the publication of a facsimile of a pass-card written in Russian and signed by Ushakov, director of the poison-gas factory. That pass-card was given to every worker in that factory, and without it one could neither enter nor leave.

Interviews with those workers brought to light all the details of the situation, also establishing the fact that the Bersol poison-gas factory in Troitzk (on the River Volga, near Samara) was managed by the German firm of Stolzenberg, of Hamburg; that Mr. Stolzenberg is a member of the reactionary National-Socialist Party of Germany, and that the Stolzenberg firm transacted business with Russia for the German Army, namely, for the so-called “Gefu” department of the latter (“Gefu” indicating by its initials the “Society for the Advancement of Industrial Undertakings”).

This concerned a second “undertaking” of the German Army on Russian territory, namely, the manufacture of poison gas. These charges have never been denied by either side, nor even an attempt made to do so. The evidence was too clear and convincing. But the German Communist Party still kept denying that Russian ships were landing munitions in Stettin. The Socialist member of the Reichstag, Franz Kunstler, put an end to those denials by publishing the statements of the Stettin harbour longshoremen who had unloaded the Russian munition ships as recently as October, 1926. The workers received for that work wages that were exceptionally high for German conditions – 40 marks per day – and were compelled to sleep on the ships.

Those statements proved, among other things, that from the ship “Artushof” alone 250 tons of grenades, calibre 7.7 centimetre, were transferred to the boat “John Brinkmann” to be shipped to Kiel. As each grenade weighed 15 pounds, the 250 tons contained 66,000 grenades. In Stettin 350,000 grenades were unloaded. The evidence given by the longshoremen was so definite and detailed that it left no room whatever for further denials. Moreover, the German Minister of War, Herr Gessler, in reply to the Socialists in the German

renaming after Trotsky was quite fitting, as he had sanctioned the use of chemical warfare against the Kronstadt rebels in 1921 (Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921* [New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1970], 211-2). (*Black Flag*)

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<sup>1</sup> This city was named after Trotsky until 1929, when it was renamed Chapayevsk after the Red Army commander Vasily Chapayev (Gatchina was likewise renamed Troitzk between 1923 and 1929). It served as a base for secret military production until the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. This

Parliament, declared on March 29 that the German Army had received munitions from Russia and had paid for them, the War Minister adding that the payments were not made from State funds, but otherwise covered.

The Soviet grenades in Germany have created a great furore in the latter country and have proven a terrific blow to the Communist Party. During the discussion of the matter in the Reichstag, one of the Communist representatives, Dr. Schwarz, bitterly attacked his own party and added new revelations to those already known concerning the activities of the "Proletarian Dictatorship" in Moscow. He denounced the Soviet Government as guilty of the worst treachery against the German proletariat, and his words have no doubt exerted a great influence upon thousands of his comrades.

In view of all these terrible exposures we are now enabled to see many things in their proper light, which seemed incomprehensible before.

When during the so-called Ruhr war which the German Government waged against France the German Communist Party suddenly became enthusiastic over the reactionary Nationalists, this new Communist attitude was hard to understand. When the Nationalist Schlageter exploded an infernal machine on the Duisburg bridge (on the Rhine), as a result of which a number of Belgian soldiers were killed, it was no other than Karl Radek who eulogised Schlageter, and all the German Communists echoed him.

It was just at that time that the Communists got in contact with reactionary officers of the German Army, and Count von Reventlow – one of the super-reactionaries – became a contributor to the *Rote Fahne*, the central organ of the Communist Party of Germany, where he advocated fusion between the Communists and the "Volkische" Party (reactionary Nationalist). To please the reactionaries, Ruth Fischer – then the most influential leader of the German Communist Party – addressed the anti-Semitic students of Berlin, calling upon them to "hang the Jewish capitalists." Considering the fact that Ruth Fischer is herself a Jewess, her appeal must have been very piquant indeed.

Then the celebrated speech of Clara Zetkin in the German Reichstag (on November 28), which roused the greatest enthusiasm among the reactionary and Nationalist elements of the whole of Germany. Having just returned from Russia, Zetkin declared upon that occasion: "The future of Germany depends on her mutual interests with Soviet Russia, in an industrial and political direction, and – if need be – also in a military way." And then she added: "Contrary to Herr Wells (Social-Democratic member of the Reichstag), I even believe that it is not so improbable as he seems to think that the German Army and the Soviet Red Army may co-operate some day."

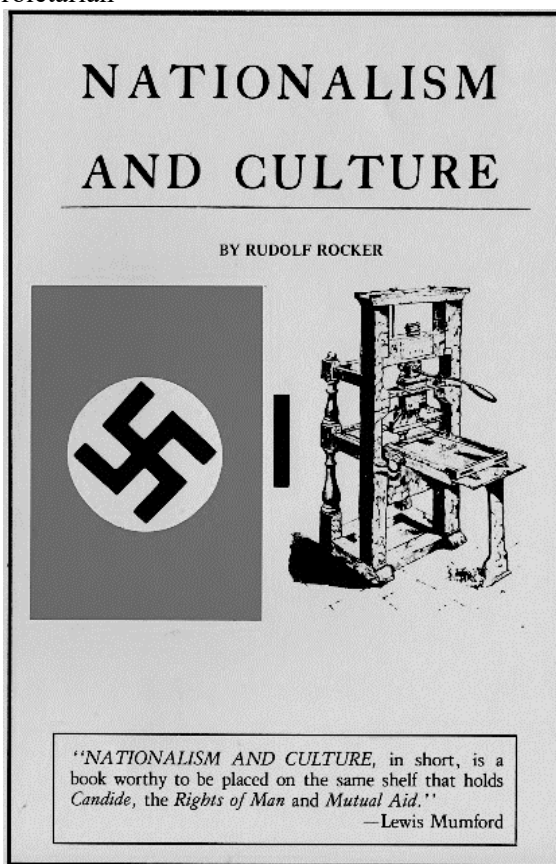
Clara Zetkin was certainly well instructed in Moscow about the offer she made the Hindenburg Republic of a military alliance with Soviet Russia. Of what nature that alliance was to be is sufficiently clear now from the proven relations of the German Army with the representatives of the "Proletarian Dictatorship."

Now it also becomes clear why Moscow has compelled the Communist Party of Germany to sacrifice its most influential leaders, in spite of the fact that the latter were elected at their Congress by a large majority. The rulers in the Kremlin could not entrust everyone with their secrets. But they could not demand of the old German Communist leaders that they suddenly change their attitude to

the German Army and the reactionaries; that would have aroused suspicion. As long as this attitude of the German Communist leaders did not handicap the foreign policy of Moscow, those leaders were tolerated. But when the Soviet Government decided on the advisability of joining hands with the German Army, and as the German Government apparently looked toward France and England for allies, Moscow began to conspire with the reactionary elements in the German Army which were inimical to the policies of Stresemann. The new Russian plan, however, necessitated the elimination of the old leaders of the Communist Party of Germany, that Moscow's hands be free.

That is the explanation of recent events, about which the last word has not yet been said.<sup>1</sup>

Berlin



<sup>1</sup> Moe details of this whole sordid affair can be found in a pamphlet issued by Aberdeen Solidarity entitled *Spartakism*

to *National Bolshevism: The K.P.D. 1918-1924* (Aberdeen: Solidarity, 1970). (*Black Flag*)

# Socialism and the Principles of the International Working Men's Association

Rudolf Rocker

*Vanguard*, May-June 1933

The development of the labour movement in most of the countries following the dissolution of the First International places into sharp relief the baneful influence – tactical and political – which authoritarian socialism – whether reformist or pseudo-revolutionist – exercised over the proletarian movement. Taking part in the politics of the bourgeois state has not brought the working class one inch nearer to true socialism, but on the contrary, it lost in dynamic power and importance because of it. The old saying, “he who dines with the Pope dies from it,” has been fully confirmed in this case. One who is drawn in by the gear of the state machinery is destroyed by it, parliamentary activity having gradually undermined the labour and the socialist movement, destroying in the first place its faith in the necessity of creative and independent action, and imbuing it with the belief that its salvation may come from above. The consequences of this delusion have become clear more than ever since the war, especially in Germany, where it struck deep roots. So that even a bourgeois paper like the *Frankfurter Zeitung* could write with reason that until now no revolution was so poverty-stricken in its ideas as the November revolution of Germany. There was not the slightest tinge of any great ideas – economic or political; it was a collapse of a labour movement in spite of the millions of workers organised politically and in the trade unions, and the slow but ceaseless process of sliding down toward the present Fascism, against which it did not even make an attempt to defend itself. The engrafting of the labour movement upon the state and its sinking to the position of a mere tool of the latter could not but lead to these results.

One of the main causes of the prevailing confusion of ideas is this fallacious conception of the relative value of the State, a conception which leads people to ignore the role of the political factors of state power in history. Under the influence of the Marxist dogma about the decisive importance of the given conditions of production, there has come to prevail the view which considers the various forms of the state and its apparatus as the political and legal complements of a certain economic structure, a view according to which the economic structure “gives the key to all social phenomena.” But in reality each chapter of history gives us a thousand examples how because of certain forms of state power the economic evolution may be turned backwards or imprisoned in certain retrograde forms for several centuries.

And do we not now see how the State completely closes the way out of the present crisis and delivers the future of great countries to generals, politicians and adventurers. Another proof is given us by Bolshevist Russia in which a party drunk with power has to the last moment blocked economic rebuilding upon the basis of true socialism, and has thrown the country into a state of slavery, chaining it to a state capitalism, whose far-reaching consequences for the future of Europe have hardly been realised by the proletariat. Two distinct conceptions of socialism manifest themselves in the aspirations of the working class. They played a great role in the past, but in the near future they will have a more decisive importance. Economic equality is not identical with social enfranchisement. Even in monasteries, prisons and barracks, there is a certain degree of economic equality: dwellings, uniforms, food, equal service. The old Inca state and the Jesuitic state of Paraguay succeeded in establishing a regimented equality for all the inhabitants of the country, in spite of which there reigned the worst of despotism, the individual being but an automaton obedient to the superior will. That is why socialism without liberty would be the worst slavery imaginable. The impulses of social justice will assert themselves fully if rooted in the libertarian sentiment of humanity. That is, “socialism will be free, or there will be none”. The right to exist on the part of the I. W. M. A. finds its deepest justification in the fact that it acknowledged and accepted all those principles. The struggle developed between the Socialists and the Bolshevists, despite its seemingly violent nature, is of no basic importance, and this will continue to be so in so far as the Russian government will see in the foreign Communist parties a fit instrument of its foreign policy. Socialists and Communists hold the same position and their tactical methods differ but little. Both rely heavily upon the state apparatus and both aspire to a form of society which could be called State Capitalism. The declaration made by the leaders of the Austrian Social-Democracy confirm this opinion. That is why we should not be misled by the clamorous, superficial and purely fraternal struggle. Even the fight between the Lassaleans and the Marxists was not carried on without white gloves. The question is whether they have any common basis for fusion, and as to this, there can be no doubt.

But less than ever does such a common basis exist now for the I. W. M. A. For never did Libertarian Socialism



have so much moral significance as now, when the whole world is swept by a furious reaction which finds its support not only in governmental circles, but which permeates deeply the broad masses of the population. The most terrible evil of our age is not the political reaction menacing society in the form of fascism; the greatest danger is the spiritual reaction due to which men become imbued with the principles of fascism. That is why the slightest concession made to fascist nationalism and to Russian State Capitalism means that true socialism is losing ground; that is why it becomes a betrayal of human liberty, a stab in the back to the revolution of the future.

While the I. W. M. A. remains true to this anti-authoritarian conception of socialism, its existence is more than justified, is of the most urgent necessity, whether the number of its adherents be small or large as compared with the other movements and tendencies. The spirit of an organisation is of greater importance than members; what is of importance above all is that which signals the future, which arouses all the despised and humiliated to the realisation that it is by their own efforts that they will be able to enter upon the road leading to free socialism.

The I. W. M. A. does not promise the poor of the earth any paradise, the doors of which will open without any struggle. Rights do not fall down like over-ripe fruits; they are won after a long struggle, by tireless work, by aiming firmly at the ultimate goal of our aspirations.

And just as the organisation of a new society can be done by workers themselves only, no state being equal to this task, so can there be only one effective method of struggle against economic and political oppression: *direct action*.

**The I. W. M. A. does not promise the poor of the earth any paradise, the doors of which will open without any struggle**

These methods are not secondary in their nature, something to be determined by circumstances only. The latter may decide the external forms of these methods, but not its character in itself. The methods of a movement always flow from its aims and principles. The one that considers political power as the necessary premise for the realisation of socialism

cannot but be drawn into the every-day political life of the state. But he who understands that the ultimate aim of socialism cannot be the conquest, but the elimination of all authority from the life of society, he must follow other roads in his struggle for daily bread and for every shred of liberty, since he knows that all rights attained are wrested in the struggle and not given as state charity. What is important for the worker is not the seizure of the state, but the seizure of the land and factories, building up a society in which there will be no exploitation, no oppression of man by man. This is the ultimate goal, this is the road followed by the I. W. M. A., an organisation which does not serve a party or the state. It is not the instrument of a new dictatorship which cannot but lead to the establishment of a new caste and placing new obstacles on the road of the workers' emancipation.

## **The Communist Party and the Idea of Dictatorship**

**Rudolf Rocker**

*Dyelo Truda*, January-February 1935 (reprinted in *Le Réveil* [Geneva] 13 April 1935)<sup>1</sup>

The disgraceful weakness of the social democracy and the labour unions, their [eternal indecisiveness and their pathetic politics<sup>2</sup>] of the "lesser evil" made things easier for the counter-revolutionaries and smoothed the way for fascism. The same goes for Communist Party policy, with its endless contradictions and utter hostility to freedom and its perilous "dictatorship of the proletariat". All of which simply helped the success of counter-revolution in Germany, by softening up the people mentally. Here let us fully expose the fact that

the Bolsheviks' victory over the Russian revolution has been an overture to fascist counter-revolution in Europe. Because the very idea of dictatorship is, by itself, a counter-revolutionary idea and represents the main obstacle to all creative activity undertaken in a spirit of freedom and justice.

Every authentic revolution, which opens up fresh possibilities to this people or that (and thus to the whole of humanity) in terms of attitudes and culture is characterised less by what it tears down than by what it

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/9w0xcq>

<sup>2</sup> Gap in the text filled in thanks to comrade JS who also writes: It might be of interest that the article is a part of a longer German language typescript (123 pp.) Rocker wrote in 1933 in exile, under the title "Der Weg ins Dritte Reich" (The Road to the Third Reich). It's in the IISG Rocker papers no. 306 (listed there under the wrong title "Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie"). (Translator)

builds up and its invitation to a new way of living. Only through this new approach can the revolution outweigh the mentality of traditions inherited from the past and wrest power from obsolete social practices. In creating something new, the revolution, by that very act, tears down the old and sketches out the paths to a better future. Therefore it has to exercise all the potential that it possesses in order to get as close as possible to the goal it has set itself. But dictatorship – which is always out to bend everything to a certain standard and tolerates only those paths that its representatives deem good – violently breaks down the creative potential of the revolutionary approach and places men and things under the yoke of a political providence that does the thinking and the acting for everybody. Thus, even in their embryonic stages, all brand-new ideas and fresh outlooks on the evolution of society are nipped in the bud. Which is why dictatorship never delivers revolution; instead, dictatorship heralds an incipient counter-revolution.

Cromwell was in no sense the embodiment of the English revolution, but the brutal violence of counter-revolution which degenerated into a brand-new form of despotism and blocked off any trend in the direction of freedom.

The dictatorship of Robespierre and the Jacobins was not emblematic of a sublime transformation releasing France from the curse of feudalism and absolutist monarchy; no, that dictatorship was to be the revolution's shroud and led on to Napoleon's military dictatorship.

In our own day, Bolshevism is merely the death knell heralding the death of the Russian revolution, after having conjured up the mental climate in which fascism can flourish.

Socialism can only cling to its meaning for the future if all of its efforts are committed to put paid once and for all, not just to monopolistic ownership of the land and the means of production, but also to any form of man's exploitation of his fellow man. The banishment of the authority principle from the life of society rather than the capture of power should be the great goal towards which socialism strives; and it must never give up on it, unless it means to turn its back on its very essence. Anybody who reckons that freedom of the individual can be replaced by equal ownership rights, has failed to grasp the basis of socialism. There is no substitute for freedom; and no replacement. Equality of economic circumstances for all and for every single person is merely a precondition for human freedom, but, on its own, cannot be a substitute for such freedom. Whoever

trespasses against freedom trespasses against the very spirit of socialism. Socialism is nothing but solidaristic collaboration on the basis of a shared goal and equal rights for all. Now, solidarity is founded upon the unfettered decision-making of the individual and cannot be imposed without its turning into tyranny and renegeing upon its very self.

All authentically socialist effort, whether in big matters or in small, should let itself be guided by the notion of opposing the spread of monopoly into every aspect of life, but it should also set itself the task of boosting and consolidating human freedom in the context of social unity. To that end, socialists should marshal all of the

forces at their disposal. Any political activity that leads to a different outcome, is a departure from the true path and does not lead to the construction of socialism. It is in the light of this argument that all of capitalism's claims to superiority over socialism are to be weighed up. As a rule, history knows nothing of any such "transitions". All we can do is grasp the distinction between the most primitive forms and the most highly evolved forms of social phenomena. Every brand-new social order is of course

unlawful in terms of the forms in which it finds expression. And yet, in every one of the new institutions, conjured into existence by that social order, there have to be inherently all of the potential for further development, just as the embryo contains in a latent condition the rounded being that is to emerge from it. All attempts to incorporate into the new order a few essential component features of the old one (and this is what every dictatorship tries to do), all efforts of that sort always lead to one of two negative outcomes: they either snuff out, right from the outset, the emergence of new forms of sociability, or they compress the tender shoots of new beginnings, hopeful of a better future, through the petrified forms of the past. Hampered in their natural growth, those shoots gradually wither as all life is drained from them.

When Mussolini says that "in the Europe of today there are only two countries where the State is worth a damn, namely, Russia and Italy", or when Lenin ventured as far as to state that "freedom is merely a bourgeois prejudice", their words mirrored two mind-sets, the kinship between which simply cannot be denied. Lenin's cynical remark proves only that he was unable to elevate his mind to the heights of the authentic notion of socialism and instead turned in despair to the obsolete circle of versions of political Jacobinism. Generally, the distinction between authoritarian

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socialism and free socialism seems pointless and monstrous; either socialism is going to be free or there not going to be any socialism.

The German Communist Party, the strongest of the European communist parties, survived only on the mistakes made by the social democrats and throughout its existence failed to come up with one single creative idea. It was nothing but a mindless tool of Russian foreign policy and unhesitatingly obeyed every word emanating from Moscow. Abiding by the spirit of such Muscovite policy, it beavered away at implanting belief in inevitability of dictatorship in the minds of those German socialist workers who had lost all faith in the wretched approach of the social democracy. Into the communist ranks were drawn elements of the working class which were not at all bad, particularly young enthusiasts with a fondness for bombast and revolutionary slogans, imagining that these all amounted to something real. Such youngsters showed themselves widely prepared to sacrifice themselves and participate in the active struggle: but the fact is that they lacked the maturity required for a deeper understanding of the actual situation. Now it was precisely their youthful enthusiasm – that gem of the workers’ movement – that was odiously exploited by the leaders of the German Communist Party and their Muscovite advisors. These youngsters, often with their enthusiasm whipped up, resorted to methods that served only the counter-revolution. Besides, the spirit of fanaticism made them deaf and dumb around anything that had about it a scrap of reasonable appreciation of the facts and events. Such a state of mind represents the best ground for the development of dictatorial aspirations, and makes their constant indecision and their miserable hypocritical policy distort all protest against reactionary measures.<sup>1</sup> They are capable of genuine struggle only in defence of the freedom of those who are themselves would-be dictators and seek the abolition of every freedom. How are we supposed to be able to reproach the reactionaries’ efforts to do away with freedom of the press or meetings and the open expression of ideas whilst simultaneously justifying the need for those very same measures in Russia?

One cannot wage a vigorous campaign against the persecution and imprisonment of revolutionary workers in the states of western Europe when soviet Russian

prisons are filled with non-Bolshevik socialists and revolutionaries whose only fault is that they hold views that differ from those officially imposed by the incumbent dictators. Just let someone dare express any such objections and the opponents on the right were quick to answer him by pointing to what was happening in the “red proletarian homeland”.

Mussolini and Hitler have unquestionably borrowed a lot from Russia; the relentless extermination of any thinking other than government-approved thinking; brutal suppression of any challenging views; the conversion of the trade unions into government agencies; and, most of all, the unrestrained arbitrariness of the State in everything relating to private and social life. Victorious Bolshevism showed the fascists the way. And let no one try to tell us that the difference between fascist dictatorship and Bolshevik dictatorship resides in their aims rather than in their means. Every aim is fleshed out in the appropriate means. Despotic acts are always the products of a despotic mind-set. Anyone who is a stranger to freedom will see it only as a “bourgeois

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prejudice”. No one will deny that in the eyes of the Bolshevik ideologues a different purpose initially was devised; but they were imprisoned within their modus operandi, which they themselves had chosen and the implementation of which alienated them more and more from the aim that they claimed to be pursuing. What had initially looked to them like just an inescapable method gradually grew into an end in itself. The inescapable outcome of every dictatorship. Anyone honestly looking for the logical consequences flowing from the Russian experience cannot help but come to the same conclusion. Men cannot be schooled in freedom and socialism and delivered from the capriciousness of an unfettered despotism that stifles their creative powers, stymies their will and kills off their every ideal, because the man who is trapped in the iron grip of an all-powerful statist machinery no longer has any connection with ideals.

The Russian revolution has run aground, not because of unfavourable economic conditions, but because of the dictatorship to which the Bolsheviks have resorted. That dictatorship smothered the life force of the revolution, even paralysing its very spirit and driven the people into

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<sup>1</sup> The translation reads: “A mentality like that represents the best soil in which to grow dictatorial aspirations, and [something missing here] their pathetically hypocritical policy and bent out of shape every protest levelled at

reactionary measures.” The article in *Le Réveil* has some missing letters: “et fait paraître cision constante et leur misérable politique hypocrite” (*Black Flag*)

the arms of a brand-new despotism. In Germany we have witnessed a certain inner connection that exists between Bolshevism and fascism; even during the second last elections a considerable number of communist voters (and this is easily proven) switched to the national-socialist camp; a lot of communists then flooded into the storm trooper units of Hitler's private army and, in some cases, entire units of the German Communist Party threw in their lot with the fascists. This connection between fascism and Bolshevism ought not to be ignored by anyone keen to understand the full tragic import of what brought about the triumph of the brown terror in Germany.

The Communist Party leaders, eager to prevent the growth of fascism's popularity, even strove to outdo the fascists in the expression of patriotic feelings; and even as the Hitlerites were dopedily bragging about wanting to "successfully deliver Germany", the communist newspapers were talking about the upcoming march of the Red Army which would unfold its tents near the Rhine. Radek was enthusiastic in singing the praises of the nationalist Schlageter on account of his attentat – this being the very same Schlageter to whom a monument has now been erected, on Hitler's orders. The German Communist Party's press latched on to all such patriotic blather and things of that ilk. The most shameful deference was even shown to the German fascists' anti-semitism and Ruth Fischer, the most popular female figure at the time, and occupying a

prominent position in the Communist Party leadership and herself of Jewish extraction, cried out at a student rally in Berlin: "String the Jewish capitalists up from the streetlamps!" One can just imagine what sort of chaos such agitation must have created in the minds of the young and in politicians of more mature years.

True, similar concessions were made to nationalism in the hope that Hitler's supporters might be lured into the communist camp. But there is a huge danger that resides specifically in the attempt to employ fascist methods to purposes that are completely alien to them. The upshot of similar attempts was the mangling of their own ideas and a dangerous undermining of all wholesome political currents which were hostile to nationalism; these were the only ones that might have stood up against the pressures from the nationalist backlash. There are some circles that cannot be squared and which it is pointless trying to connect by means of a bridge across the gulf between them as ideas also are governed by certain laws of their own and they cannot be reconciled other than when there is a degree of common ground between them. The German Communist Party leadership's naïve gambit as they tried to lure the fascists over to them by tossing them concessions to patriotism by way of titbits, has merely culminated in the strengthening of fascism's influence, with the latter finishing up recruiting fresh members drawn from the membership of the Communist Party itself.

# On German Social Democracy

**Rudolf Rocker**

*Dyelo Truda*, February 1935 (reprinted in *Le Réveil* [Geneva] 30 March 1935)<sup>1</sup>

To many people the current developments in Germany seem almost unfathomable. Only a few understand the character and true causes for the so-called "national revolution". Above all there is amazement that a country that could call on an organised labour movement, the largest in the world, with a long history of growth behind it, that a country like that could have been defeated by Hitler's supporters and brought to its knees at one fell swoop, without any serious resistance. In actual fact, the fascist victory was not achieved by surprise attack but was the logical outcome of a lengthy evolution, with a variety of factors at play.

Ever since the days of the First International, a huge change has taken place in the character of the labour movement in most European countries. Instead of the old socialist ideological factions waging an economic battle (organisations in which the vanguard of the International saw the building blocks of the society of the future and the natural agencies for overhauling the popular economy in accordance with the spirit of socialism) we had the current political labour parties

and their parliamentary efforts alongside other parties, all within the parameters of the bourgeois State. The formerly socialist education of the workers whereby it was explained to them why they needed to capture the land and industrial ventures, has been gradually forgotten. In its place, the talk these days is of nothing but the conquest of political power in accordance with a movement definitively abiding by the capitalist current.

The new workers' parties directed their activities primarily into drawing the workers into the parliamentary struggle and moving towards the gaining of political power as a precondition of achieving socialism in practical terms. Over time. The upshot of that was a brand-new ideology differing in its very essence from the socialist ideology of the First International. After swiftly taking first place among the labour parties in most countries, parliamentarism drew into the socialist ranks a majority of bourgeois and intellectual personnel on the look-out for a career in politics. The spiritual climate within the movement underwent even greater changes and all authentically

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/ttf0xg>

socialist aspirations were little by little relegated to the background. A surrogate, that had nothing in common with socialism beyond the name, supplanted the First International's constructive socialism.

And so, increasingly, socialism was drained of its nature as a novel cultural ideal that was called upon to prepare people mentally for the abolition of capitalist civilisation and for making them capable of implementing this change in practical terms and that trend was not halted by the artificial borders of nation-states. In the catalogue of "leaders" of this new phase in the movement, the ideology of the nation-state was increasingly blended with party ideology, to the point where one could no longer quite make out where one ideology ended and the other began. A habit developed of looking at socialism through the spectacle of so-called "national interests". When all is said and done, the contemporary workers' movement found itself being gradually subsumed as a necessary component part, into the structures of the nation state, providing it with an inner equilibrium which it had just lost. The drip-drip infiltration of capitalist society into the proletariat's ideals was conditioned by the practical activism of the workers' parties, an activism that necessarily impacted upon the ideology of their political leaders. The very same parties that once upon a time marched off to war to conquer political power under socialism's colours, found themselves being obliged by the relentless logic of events to sacrifice one morsel after another of their erstwhile socialism to the State's national policy. All undetected by their members, these same parties became tools, buffers between capital and labour, or turned into political lightning rods, protecting the capitalist economic system from looming catastrophe.

Germany never having had, broadly speaking, any form of workers' movement other than social democracy, was additionally devoid of all revolutionary tradition, albeit that this trend ran very deep there. Then its sway was brought to bear on the movement in most other countries. The mighty organisational machinery of the German Social Democracy and its seeming successes in every election earned it huge undeserved prestige abroad. It was forgotten that none of this could shake capitalist rule. And as other socialist parties elsewhere, were increasingly directing their movements along the

lines set by the German movement, they were more and more inclined to overstate the German Social Democracy's influence and the might of its organisation.

The campaigning by Ferdinand Lassalle smoothed the way for the German labour movement, and his influence lingered into the years thereafter. Through his activities, Lassalle left a special imprint on German socialism, which made itself felt especially powerfully, and through the years leading up to the World War as well as in the wake of the so-called German "revolution" this was replicated. Lassalle was a life-long fanatical supporter of the Hegelian notion of the State and furthermore he espoused the thinking of the French statist socialist Louis Blanc. Lassalle's successors believed so profoundly in the State's "mission to liberate" that the German liberal press accused them of being "Bismarck's patsies". The accusers adduced no material evidence to back up these charges: yet Lassalle's odd stance on the "social empire" made such an accusation quite understandable. Abroad, there were many who thought that Germany was a "marxist country", if ever there was one, and this view was bolstered by

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the barbarous struggle that the new powers-that-be wage against "marxism". But that was not the case. The number of genuine marxists in Germany was very small and Lassalle's thinking influenced the Social Democracy's political aspirations a lot more than the ideas of Marx or Engels. True, Marx did announce that the conquest of political power is the essential precondition for achieving socialism, but, from his viewpoint, once the State had accomplished its supposed purpose and done away with the class divisions within society and done away with the monopolies, its fate would be to fade away and make way for a society freed of authority. This was a miscalculation, entirely exposed as such by the Bolshevik experiment in Russia; since the State has emerged as not just the defender but also as the mainstay and creator of monopolies and class ascendancy in society. But even so, Marx foresaw the ultimate dismantling of the State, whereas Lassalle was an enthusiastic champion of the statist idea and ready to sacrifice all civil liberties to it. From Lassalle the German socialists have inherited their ardent belief in the State and most of their anti-freedom aspirations.

From Marx all they have borrowed is his economic fatalism, a belief in the invincible power of economic circumstances. This belief, like any other version of fatalism, sapped the will of the popular masses and systematically dismantled their appetite for serious revolutionary action.

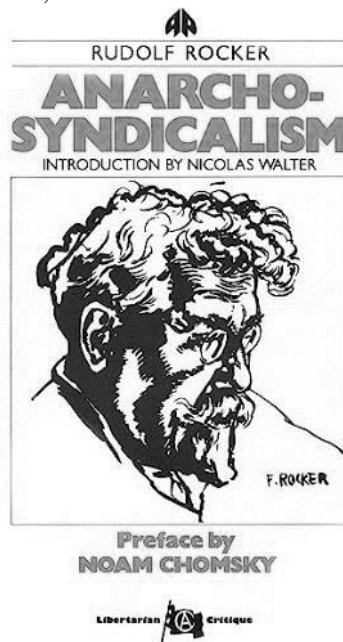
Bearing in mind the powerful influence that that embodiment of a militaristic, bureaucratic State, Prussia, wielded over German social life, thus we can grasp what the necessary outcome of the “educating” of the masses of the people upon which the social democrats concentrated was bound to be. That outcome gained substance with a precision and tragic clarity when the German revolution of November 1918 erupted. The German socialists, absorbed for years by run-of-the-mill parliamentary efforts had gradually lost all their spiritual baggage and were no longer capable of anything creative. The most influential social democratic leaders and especially Fritz Ebert, the German republic’s first president, strove by all means possible to snuff out the revolutionary sentiments at large among the popular masses in the wake of Germany’s defeat and did everything in their power to keep popular activity within the parameters of the law. To the very last, those leaders resisted any measures that they considered too radical and on the very eve of 9 November, the *Vorwärts* newspapers carried an article cautioning its patient readers against setting their sights too high, arguing that the German people had yet to reach the age when it might entertain dreams of a republic.<sup>1</sup>

One can imagine what such a “revolution” might result in. Just a year after the 1918 coup d’état, the democratic bourgeoisie’s gazette, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, expressed the view that in the history of the peoples of Europe there had never before been a revolution so impoverished in terms of creative thinking and energy as the German revolution. A revolution that grew of the

irresistible ambition on the part of an oppressed people to cast off its shackles and pursue a brand-new future. But in Germany the revolution was foisted on to the people from outside. After the allied powers had announced that they were refusing to conclude a peace with the Hohenzollern dynasty [the republic] followed pretty much automatically. The people acted, not out of any inner conviction of its own, but under the lash of

necessity. True, in Germany there was also a certain number of honest, determined revolutionaries striving to inject some added vigour into events and open up wider vistas for the revolution. But those revolutionaries represented a tiny minority and were unable to reverse the impact that a protracted education had had on the people. They were unable to rouse the millions of German workers banded together in the ranks of political and professional workers’ organisations. Never before had it been so obvious that within revolutionary movements the mentality prevailing among the masses of the populace is a factor that looms even larger than their technical organisation. An organisation that cannot command revolutionary enthusiasm and has no initiative of its

own, is just a force to be reckoned with on paper and disappoints when put to the test. Which is exactly what occurred in Germany. The German working class had no real heavyweight revolutionary tradition. The only weapons with which it had any familiarity were parliamentary action and the entirely reformist activities of the workers’ trades organisations and it looked to those things alone for its salvation. Even universal suffrage, which in France and elsewhere had had to be extorted by means of revolutionary action, had been bestowed upon Germans by Bismarck as a gift, so to speak, without any special effort on their own part. And so the revolution was tainted from the outset and there was no spread of the sort of inner energy that is absolutely a requirement if there is to a radical transformation of the past.



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<sup>1</sup> A reference to the German Revolution of 1918. This was triggered by the German Naval Command seeking a battle with the British Royal Navy with its naval order of 24 October. Instead of obeying their orders, German sailors led a revolt in the naval ports of Wilhelmshaven on 29 October,

followed by the Kiel mutiny in the first days of November. These disturbances spread the spirit of revolt across Germany and ultimately led to the proclamation of a republic on 9 November as a result of mass demonstrations. (*Black Flag*)

# Social Rights and Freedoms: Their Vital Worth to us

**Rudolf Rucker**

*The World Scene from the Libertarian Point of View* (Chicago: Free Society Group of Chicago, 1951)

It has long been a truism that the social rights and liberties which we have inherited from former generations and which we now exercise freely, have lost their original meaning for most people. As a rule one cherishes only that which one has attained through personal struggle, forgetting all too readily the historic significance of the achievements made by others in previous eras, by dint of costly sacrifices. Were this not the case, we could not account for the great periodic relapses which occur in human evolution and progress. All the social gains won in the past, from the most ancient days to the present, would then be drawn, if shown on a chart, on a constantly ascending line, unbroken by occasional reactions.

It is only when such dearly won rights have become the prey of an unbridled reaction that we begin to realise how precious they were to us, and how poignantly their loss affects us. The present epoch and the shattering events of the most fearful catastrophe in the history of all nations, have taught us a lesson in this respect which cannot be easily misunderstood, and which should spur us all to sober reflection on the subject.

There was a time when supposed revolutionaries embraced the notion that drastic repression must necessarily generate counter-pressure of like intensity among the people, thus accelerating the cause of general liberation. This delusion, which could spring only from blind dogmatism, is still very much in vogue and constitutes one of the greatest perils in the path of all social movements. Such a concept is not only basically false, with no historical justification; what is worse, it tends to pave the way for every phase of intellectual and social reaction. For it is difficult to assume that people who have allowed themselves to be robbed of any of their bitterly-fought-for rights and freedoms, will exhibit burning energy in battling to achieve full human rights.

The irrational idea that political and social liberties possess no value for us so long as the system under which we live has not been completely removed, is equivalent to acceptance of Lenin's sophistical statement that "Freedom is merely a bourgeois prejudice." Yet those who would make this point of view their own must, if they are to be consistent, regard as purposeless all the rights won through past revolutions and great popular movements; moreover, they would be obliged to embrace a new absolutism which, in its inevitable effects, is far worse than the monarchical absolutism of previous centuries.

None of the rights and liberties that we enjoy today in more or less democratic countries were ever granted to the peoples by their governments as a voluntary gift. Not even the most liberal regime confers rights and freedoms upon a nation on its own initiative; it does so only when the resistance of the people can no longer be ignored. This holds good not only for Europe, but all countries on all continents; and not merely for any given period but for all historical eras.

The revolutions in Switzerland and the Netherlands against the tyranny of the Austrian and Spanish dynasties respectively; the two English revolutions against absolute monarchy, the revolt of the American colonies against oppression by the mother country, the great French Revolution with its reverberations throughout Europe, the revolutionary events of 1848-49, the uprising of the Paris Commune in 1871 and the Cantonal Revolution in Spain in 1873, as well as the Russian Revolution during the First World War prior to the ascendancy of Bolshevism and its degeneration into a counter-revolution, the so-called *Dictatorship of the Proletariat*; the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and the awakening of the "colonial nations" – all these events of historic scope have kept society in a state of internal ferment for centuries, creating the prerequisites for a new social evolution which, though frequently interrupted by reactionary relapses, yet serve to direct our lives along new paths. And these events likewise made the people of many nations increasingly aware of their elemental rights and zealous for preserving their own dignity, with the result that the horizon of our personal and collective rights and liberties has widened to a degree which would have been unthinkable under royal absolutism.

Without the French Revolution and its powerful reverberations in nearly all the countries of Europe, the outstanding mass movements of our time, the wide dissemination of democratic and socialistic ideas, and the development of the modern labour movement, the aspirations of which have left an indelible imprint upon history – none of these would have been possible; for it was the rights and freedoms established through that epic rising that prepared the soil upon which these new concepts could grow and flourish.

No one understood this fundamental truth better than Michael Bakunin when, in the stormy period of 1848-49, he sought to win over the Slavic nations of the East in favour of the revolution and to persuade them to join in an alliance with Western democracy, to smash the

three remaining citadels of royalist absolutism in Europe – Russia, Austria, and Prussia. For he sensed rightly that the continuing existence of these last strongholds of unlimited despotism constituted the greatest existing danger to the development of freedom on that continent, and that these powers would constantly try to work toward a reversion to the days of the Holy Alliance. This attempt by Bakunin – ending in failure as it did – appears all the more significant since Marx and Engels themselves could think of nothing better than to advocate, in the *Rheinische Zeitung*, the extermination of all Slavic peoples except the Poles, even going so far as to deny to those nations generally any inner need for higher cultural attainment.<sup>1</sup>

Human beings never resort to open resistance solely for the joy of it. Revolutions break out only when every other possible recourse has been exhausted, and when the blind inflexibility and mental myopia of the ruling classes leave no alternative. Revolutions create nothing new in themselves; they merely clear the path of obstacles and help bring to fruition already existing germs of new concepts. Every form of freedom gained through struggle possesses inestimable importance; it becomes a base for further progress, a stepping stone on the road to general emancipation. Even the most minor privilege and the meagerest freedom may have to be bought at the cost of heavy sacrifice; and to discard such treasure without a fight means playing into the hands of reaction and perhaps giving a fresh lease of life to the barbarism of times long past.

Even in democratic countries few individuals remember what such men as Chaptal, Tocqueville, Gournay, Turgot, Goyot, Buret, and so many others have taught those who would read or listen about the economic and social conditions of the old absolutist regime; indeed, these are things of which the predominant majority of our contemporaries have but the faintest idea. This ignorance of the era which preceded the French Revolution is largely responsible for the relative unconcern with which so many persons today view the overhanging menace of the totalitarian state and for the ease with which others accept the tenets of the new absolutism as the only alternative to the prevailing social chaos.

The system of royal absolutism constituted a hierarchy organised unto the minutest detail, and one to which

every concept of personal freedom and equal rights was completely alien. Every individual was assigned his niche in society, a decision in which he had no voice at all. Only the thin stratum of the ruling classes enjoyed extensive privileges, while the broad masses of people had no rights whatever. The overwhelming majority of the rural population was bound to the soil which, as serfs, the living property of the feudal barons, they were never permitted to leave. Any attempt to escape from that servitude through flight was punished by savage corporal punishment or death.

This system, which held most of Europe in its grip until the outbreak of the French Revolution, not only deprived the mass of subjects of every form of human right, but through an endless and exacting supervision of every phase of human activity, it stifled all economic and social progress. A veritable mountain of royal decrees, ordinances, and regulations, precluded every possibility of improving or accelerating the process of production through new inventions or other innovations.

Rigid working methods were prescribed for every artisan, and no deviation from these was tolerated. State commissions fixed not only the length and width of the cloth, but also the number of threads which had to be woven into the fabric. The tailor was told exactly how many stitches he could make in sewing a sleeve into a coat; the shoemaker how many stitches were required to sew a sole on a boot. Hatmakers in France were obliged to comply with more than sixty different regulations in the manufacture of a single hat. Dyers were permitted to employ only officially specified woods in dyeing fabrics. Every manufacturer had to abide by regulations of this sort, with the result that in France, as well as in most other European countries, production methods at the outbreak of the Revolution differed little from those in effect a century before.

Spies were planted in every workshop. An army of officials maintained a close surveillance over factories, looking with eagle eyes for the slightest breach of the rules. All products which deviated in the slightest degree from the prescribed norm were confiscated or destroyed and stiff penalties were imposed on the offenders. In many instances the worker thus found “guilty” suffered the mutilation of his hands, and in others a brand was burnt into his face with an iron. In cases of severe infractions a culprit might be delivered

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<sup>1</sup> A reference to Engels and his diatribes against “non-historic” peoples, as discussed in Roman Rosdolsky’s important work “Engels and the ‘Nonhistoric’ Peoples: The National Question in the Revolution of 1848.” (*Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory*, No. 18/19). Most infamously, Engels proclaimed that “one day we shall take a bloody revenge on the Slavs for this cowardly and base betrayal of the revolution” and “hatred of the Russians was, and still is, the first revolutionary passion of the Germans”. The revolution could only be secured “against these Slavs peoples by the most decisive acts of terrorism” and “a war of

*annihilation and ruthless terrorism*, not in the interests of Germany but in the interests of the revolution!” There would be “a bloody revenge in the Slav barbarians” and a war which will “annihilate all these small pig-headed nations even to their very names” and “will not only cause reactionary classes and dynasties to disappear from the face of the earth, but also entire reactionary peoples. And that too is an advance.” (quoted by Rosdolsky, 85, 86). For some strange reason, Marxists rarely mention that Engels advocated ethnic cleansing in the name of the revolution against those whom he considered “nonhistoric” peoples. (*Black Flag*)



over to the hangman and his workshop and equipment destroyed.

Very often additional ordinances were enacted merely for the purpose of extorting money from the guild master. The regulations were so sweeping and so preposterous that, even with the best of will, complete compliance was impossible. In such contingencies there was no recourse for the guild masters but to pay heavy bribes for the rescinding of especially oppressive ordinances. Extortions of this nature were by no means exceptional; on the contrary, they became increasingly common as the rulers avidly seized upon every conceivable device to fill the coffers of their treasuries, drained by years of profligate spending by the royal courts.

When Louis Blanc and various other historians of the Great Revolution relate that, after the abolition of this colossal burden of idiotic decrees, ordinances, arid regulations, men felt as if they had been liberated from some mammoth prison, they simply are stating a fact. Only through complete elimination of those endless obstructions was it made possible to bring about a radical transformation of economic and social conditions. This transformation having come, a fertile soil was created for hundreds of useful inventions which formerly never would have seen the light of day. And incidentally, that fact provides irrefutable proof of the fallacy of the Marxian precept that the form of the State is determined by the mode of production in existence at a given time. Actually it was not the conditions of production which gave rise to royal absolutism; rather, it was the system of absolutism which for more than two centuries forcibly prevented any improvement in the methods of production and thus paralysed any tendency toward their modernisation.

With the disappearance of the feudal order, however, not only were the possibilities of improvement in social production altered and enhanced, but the political and social institutions of various nations changed to an extent that one scarcely could have imagined prior to that turning point. Feudal bondage, which hitherto had shackled men with iron fetters to the soil, and had imposed on each a mandatory occupation, was replaced by the right of freedom of movement, choice of domicile, and the privilege of choosing the occupation for which one thought himself best fitted.

The draconic punishments meted out for even slight disregard for regulations, frequently after confessions

forced from the victims through torture, were supplanted by new concepts of justice which stemmed from the Revolution and which were more in accord with the dictates of humanity. Once it had been possible for members of the privileged classes to have their enemies buried alive in one of Europe's countless bastilles by the simple device of preparing a *Lettre de Cachet*. But now the lately won civil rights guaranteed that every accused person be arraigned before a judge within a specified period of time. He had to be informed of the charge against him, and he had to be given the right of counsel.

To us, who perhaps have never met with any different type of administration of justice, these safeguards may appear commonplace; yet there was a time when they did not exist, and it was only through prodigious sacrifices that they came into being.

Along with these human rights there evolved, gradually and by virtue of incessant struggle, the right to freedom of expression in speech and

writing, freedom of assemblage, and the right to organise, as well as other gains. One need but recall in this connection the severe sacrifices that were necessary to bring about abolition of the hated institution of censorship, or the bitter conflict that the workers in England and France had to wage for the right to organise, to appreciate properly these rights. It is true that all such rights and freedoms have meaning only so long as they remain alive in the consciousness of the people, and so long as people are ready to defend them against any reaction. But this very fact should impel us all the more to uphold them and to keep a sense of their vital importance fresh in the public mind.

There are individuals who consider themselves extremely radical when they assert that such rights already have lost their significance, if for no other reason than that they have been embodied in the constitutions of various nations; that, at the most, they are trivial accomplishments which have not brought us a single step nearer to social emancipation. Whoever holds that opinion is rather hopeless; for thus he demonstrates that he has learned nothing from the devastating experiences of the recent past.

The point to be stressed here is not just that these rights are incorporated in constitutions, but rather that governments were compelled to guarantee them as a result of pressure from the masses. If such forms of freedom were in reality so meaningless, reactionaries all over the world hardly would have gone to the trouble to

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abolish or curtail them whenever they had opportunity, as we have seen them do in so many European countries in the last decade.

But to dismiss all political and social betterment as *insignificant* is absurd, if for no other reason than because we would then have to brand as worthless all attempts on the part of the labouring masses to improve their conditions within the existing social order. All intelligent individuals realise that the basic social problem cannot be solved solely with the usual battles for higher wages, important though these battles may be as a means toward an immediate essential economic end. If the above mentioned argument were true, there would be little point in combating the new feudalism of totalitarian states, since a few rights more or less would not really matter.

Everything that Socialists of various orientations have affirmed in the past about the shortcomings of the capitalistic economic order is still true today, and will remain true so long as it operates to the benefit of small minorities instead of furthering the welfare of all members of society. But this does not alter the fact that social movements which aim to do away with prevailing social and economic evils, can flourish only in a climate of intellectual freedom. They must be able to propagate their ideas and to create organisations or institutions which help to promote the liberation of humanity. Hence what is needed are more rights, not fewer; not lesser but greater freedoms, if we want to get closer to the goal of social emancipation.

Even the least of the freedoms won as a result of constant striving, sets up a milestone on the road to liberation of mankind, and by the same token the loss of the slightest social gain represents a setback for our cause. Certainly one will not achieve liberty for all by forfeiting without a struggle every personal freedom. Rights and liberties can be lost on a small scale just as they are often won in limited measure. For once the first step on this ominous path has been taken, all other rights and freedoms are exposed to the same danger. If we make the smallest concession to reaction, we need not be surprised if in time we lose the priceless heritage which others, through suffering and sacrifice, have won for us.

If any further proof be needed to corroborate this contention, it is amply provided by the history of the last decade. That should suffice to open the eyes of anyone not afflicted with incurable intellectual blindness. The new absolutism is casting its menacing shadow today over all cultural and social gains achieved by mankind after centuries of travail. In Soviet Russia and in most Eastern countries dominated by its military might, the right of a man to live in a locality of his own choosing, or to enter the occupation which seems most promising to him, has been cast upon the scrapheap of passing time. The governmental bureaucracy allots to each individual an arbitrary place for his productive

activity, and this he may abandon only upon express permission or command of the authorities. A privilege granted to the lowliest peasant after the abolition of serfdom under the Tsars, is no longer extended to any worker in the vaunted Red Fatherland of the Proletariat.

Prior to the Stalinist regime, not a single capitalist state had dared to set up concentration camps, where under the most rigorous conditions every worker is assigned his daily production quota, which he must fulfil under pain of brutal penalties akin to those inflicted upon the galley slaves of the Caesarian era. But in the Russia of Stalin and in the lands enchained by his tyranny the establishment of such slave labour camps has become a commonplace event, and millions of helpless human beings are its victims.

Simultaneously with this relapse into the darkest ages of feudalism came the suppression of all social and political rights. All organs for the communication of ideas, the press, the radio, the theatre, motion pictures, and public gatherings generally, fell under the control of an iron censorship, and a ruthless police system impervious to even the slightest appeal of humanity took command. The trade unions, shorn of the right to strike and of all other effective rights, were converted into tools of the all-powerful State and now merely serve the purpose of giving moral sanction to the enormities of an unbounded economic and political enslavement.

The brutal suppression of all social movements, from the Mensheviks and Anarchists to the so-called Trotskyism, within the Soviet confines; the employment of torture to extort confessions from persons guilty or innocent of wrong-doing, and the cynical mockery of all concepts of justice so glaringly evident in the notorious Moscow "purge" trials, the like of which Tsarist Russia could not duplicate; the re-introduction of the infamous practice of taking hostages, which makes even the families and friends of individuals allegedly imperilling the safety of the State liable to arrest and punishment; the deportation of the population of whole villages to remote areas in Siberia – these, plus a conspicuous array of other punitive measures borrowed from the barbarism of long vanished epochs, characterise a system which, according to its own figures, possesses barely 8,000,000 organised adherents in Russia, and yet undertakes to reduce more than 200,000,000 people to servitude under its inhuman regime of violence.

And that is not all! Under this new absolutism there exists neither freedom of thought in science nor any creative autonomy in art, the representatives of which are likewise at the mercy of the relentless dictatorship of the Communist Party machine. Not a month passes but that practitioners of the arts and sciences are arraigned before the bar of this new State Church for deviation from the prescribed line and denounced publicly as heretics. The very fact that virtually all such accused persons – including composers, painters,

architects, economists, historians, anthropologists, construction engineers, and chemists – have bent the knee before the new powers-that-be, publicly confessed their “aberrations” and promised to mend their ways, is further evidence of the general degradation of character which becomes inevitable under a totalitarian regime.

While monarchical absolutism prevailed, it was still possible for individuals like Cervantes, Goya, Rabelais, Diderot, Voltaire, Milton,

Lessing, and hundreds of other men of genius to express themselves. In Stalin’s Russia such latitude is unthinkable.

During the reign of Tsar Nikolai II, Tolstoi could still venture to publish his famous declaration against the war with Japan in the *London Times*, and thus have the whole civilised world as a sounding board. The Russian Government dared not touch a hair of his head. One might well ask what would have happened to Tolstoi if he had lived under the reign of Stalin. To ask this question is to answer it; and the only possible answer to this hypothetical query will show clearly to what extent millions of people have lost their basic human rights.

Millions of others will inexorably suffer the same fate unless they take an indomitable stand in all countries for the defence of rights and freedoms won at so bitter a cost!

Let us not deceive ourselves. This is the true nature of the new absolutism which, under the pretext of social emancipation, is today threatening to smother all freedom, all human dignity and hope for a brighter future, in order to plunge the world into a modern Dark Age the duration of which no one can predict. The peril is all the greater because in every country a fanatical and unprincipled group of disciples is at the disposal of these latter-day tyrants, unconditionally obedient to their every command. Consciously so far as the leaders are concerned, and unconsciously in the case of the intellectually backward masses whom they exploit for evil purposes, these disciples serve the interests of the Red Imperialism while paving the way for dictatorship in their own countries.

At the same time this new despotism tends to strengthen reaction in every country, with the result that the

imperilled nations proceed to do away with long-established rights and freedoms with the ready excuse that such action is the only efficacious means of cutting the ground from under Russian espionage within their borders. The steady deterioration of civil liberties in the “democratic” countries is a clear indication of the danger we face of being contaminated by totalitarian reaction on our own soil.

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The urgent call of the hour is for a decisive collaboration among persons of good will in all strata of the population, who reject dictatorship in every form and guise, and who are prepared to defend their rights and freedoms to the last ditch. This is the only way to re-direct social evolution into new paths and to build a solid and straight road to universal emancipation. Above all, however, we must strive to re-awaken among the masses a strong desire for liberty and a sense of human dignity, and to spur them in their resistance against every threat to their inherent rights. Such an emphatic repudiation of reaction in all forms and phases is at the same time the only means of averting a new World War and of creating an understanding among peoples everywhere on earth on the

basis of mutual aid and federalist principles. In a word, the power politics of governments can be frustrated only through resistance by the masses themselves.

Unfortunately there are still a great many complacent spirits who ostensibly believe that the sacrifice of social rights and liberties is essential to the achievement of economic security for everyone. Such a point of view is the most objectionable of all since it implies abrogation of all human dignity. Not only is this assumption thoroughly fallacious, as amply demonstrated by the wretched economic conditions of the Russian peasants and industrial workers; what is worse, it leads toward utter disintegration of character.

Let those who are of that mind reflect upon Benjamin Franklin’s maxim: “He who is prepared to sacrifice his freedom for security deserves neither freedom nor security.”

For us, however, the old saying still holds good: *Socialism will be free or it will not be at all!*

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# A Guide to Anarcho-Syndicalism and Libertarian Socialism

Wayne Price

Tom Wetzel, *Overcoming Capitalism: Strategy for the Working Class in the 21st Century* (Chico CA: AK Press, 2022)

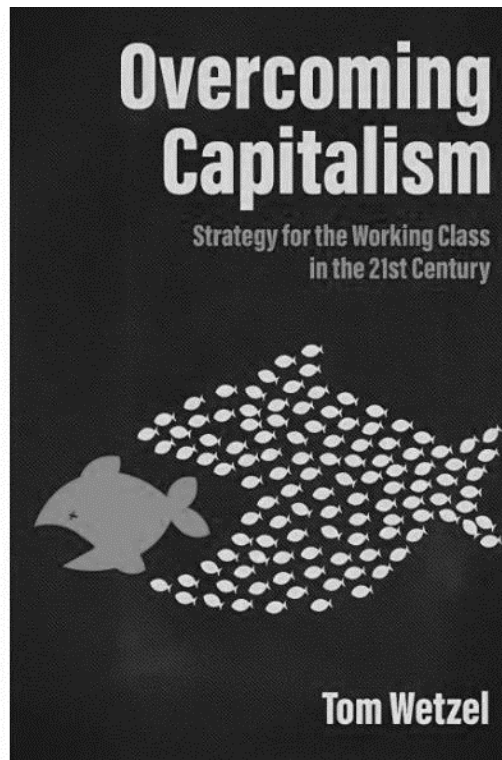
This is an important book. Tom Wetzel presents a vision of a free, equal, and cooperative society, without classes, states, or other forms of oppression. It would be directly managed from below in all areas, including the economy and community. He refers to this programme, alternately, as “revolutionary syndicalism” or “libertarian socialism.”

Traditionally “libertarian socialism” is a synonym for “anarchist-socialism” and other views similar to anarchism, such as council-communist Marxism or guild socialism. Yet, although Wetzel occasionally refers to anarchism, he does not identify his programme as “anarchist” or “anarcho-syndicalist.” He had done so previously – see his essays in the *Anarchist Library* – but not now, for reasons he does not explain. In my opinion, this book is an exposition of revolutionary class-struggle anarchism and an expansion of anarcho-syndicalism.

The book covers many topics, mainly divided into three sections. The first analyses how our society works (chapters 1 through 5). The second, which is the heart of the work, covers strategies for “overcoming capitalism” (chapters 6 to 10). The last considers what a new society (“libertarian ecosocialism”) could be like (chapter 11).

## Class Conflict

His view of present day society is based on a class analysis. Capitalist society is divided into layers related to the production and accumulation of profit. Holding up society is primarily the working class. It produces society’s goods and services through its labour “by hand and brain.” The capitalist class owns the means of production –



capital – and is therefore able to squeeze a surplus – profits – out of the workers’ labour. The key evil of capitalism is not so much poverty (although there is plenty of poverty) but domination. People do not get to control the social forces which rule their lives. Capitalism is an immoral system to be “overcome” and replaced.

This class analysis is influenced, at least, by classical Marxism. While I am a revolutionary anarchist-socialist, I mostly agree with Karl Marx’s analysis of how capitalism works, as does Wetzel, to a certain degree. “A major contribution of Marx to

the socialist movement was his analysis of the structure and dynamics of the capitalist regime.... The whole capital accumulation process is built on a framework of oppression and exploitation. Thus far, libertarian socialists generally agree with these aspects of Marx’s analysis.” (pp. 312–314)

However, Wetzel criticises Marxism for what he regards as an overly simplistic view, its main division of society into capitalists and workers. Wetzel agrees with this, but adds a middle layer of minions which directly serves the capitalists: supervisors, managers, overseers, bureaucrats, lawyers, and other better-off professionals, in both private enterprises and public services. (This does not include “white collar” workers, such as teachers or clerks, who are part of the working class.) Others have called this the “professional-managerial class” or the “coordinator class,” but Wetzel prefers “bureaucratic control class.”

The charge, repeated by Wetzel, that Marx did not expect the rise of middle management bureaucrats under capitalism is often stated but is factually

untrue. (For example, see *Capital*, vol. 3, chapter XXIII, or Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*.) Wetzel uses the concept to argue that it is not enough to oppose the capitalist owning class. It is also necessary to oppose the bureaucratic control class. It is necessary to organise so that working people can directly control their own lives without a bureaucratic elite over them, telling them what to do, and exploiting them as much as do the capitalist owners. (This continues the historical insight of anarchism at least since Michael Bakunin.)

Wetzel is well aware that class conflict is not the only social division. He feels that capitalism promotes other conflicts – such as race or gender. They overlap with – and interact with – class. For example, he sees the oppression of African-Americans as having two class functions. First, most of them are in a super-exploited, impoverished, section of the working class. Capitalists make super-profits from paying them very low wages. Secondly, racism serves to divide the working class as a whole. White workers can feel superior to workers of colour and refuse to work together with them for common goals – even goals which would be to their mutual benefit. (This is a major reason the U.S. does not have universal health care unlike every other industrialised/imperialist country). Therefore racism hurts white workers, even if not as much as it does People of Colour.

He explains ecological disaster as being caused by capital's drive for accumulation of profits, as expressed by "cost shifting." The capitalists do not pay the whole cost of what they make. Side "costs" of pollution, or disturbing the world's climate, are "paid" by the whole of society, or just by the workers – or no one at all. They are not taken out of the profits of the specific businesses and their owners.

The author discusses specific problems of U.S. and world capitalism, including its decline in the last

decades. But he does not lay out the fundamental systemic weaknesses of capitalism: its instability, its business cycles, the tendency of the rate of profit to decline, its trend toward monopolisation, and its trend toward stagnation. This limited analysis weakens his overall presentation.

### **Revolutionary Unionism and Anti-Electoralism**

The basis of Wetzel's strategy is to build a mass movement – or alliance of movements – which is organised on the same principles of the society we want to see ("prefiguration"). It needs to be actively managed by the people involved in it, horizontally associated, and committed to the concept that an injury to one is an injury to all (solidarity). Central to this strategy are radically democratic and militant unions, moving in a revolutionary direction. They may be formed by organising new unions in the majority of (unorganised) workplaces in the U.S. Workers may also organise themselves within the existing unions, in radically democratic groupings, counter to the unions' ruling bureaucrats.

This is distinct from a strategy of seeking to get a group of militants elected

to take over the unions and run them better than the bureaucrats did, but still top down. He refers to "the two souls of unionism," the bureaucratic, centralised, top-down organisation, and the solidarity-based, democratic, self-organisation of the workers who really make up the union.

While emphasising the strategic power workers have in the economy, he does not limit his approach to radical unionism. Wetzel advocates community organising, tenant organising, associations of African Americans, of women, of LGBTQ people, and so on. Their methods would include mass demonstrations, civil disobedience, rent strikes, general strikes, and occupations of schools and of workplaces. As such hell-raising advances, and popular struggles win gains, he hopes that people will become more enthusiastic, they will improve their class consciousness, they will be more open to ideas from revolutionaries,

and they will become ready for a revolution to replace capitalism with libertarian socialism.

This approach puts him in opposition to the strategies which dominate on the left. The main left strategy is electoralism, seeking to change society through votes. (This goes back to the electoral party-building advocated by Marx.) This is the dominant approach of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), the largest socialist organisation in the U.S.A.

Most “electoral socialists” are for working within the Democratic Party, despite its history as the graveyard of popular movements – and despite Marx’s opposition to building capitalist parties. Unlike left parties in Europe, the Democrats have never claimed to be “socialist” of any sort, but have always been pro-capitalist (and, in their earliest history, pro-slavery).

Some “democratic socialists” are critical of the Democrats – for good reasons – but advocate the formation of a new, “third,” party of the left, possibly based in the labour unions and other progressive forces. However, such a new party is only likely to be formed (by union bureaucrats, liberal Democrats, and various opportunists) if there are massive upheavals in society – formed in order to misdirect the popular upheavals back into electoral reformism.

Wetzel argues that the state is made to serve the interests of the ruling capitalist class and cannot be used to serve the working class and oppressed. Reforms may be won, for a time through elections, but not the transformation of society. And the state is likely to give reforms and benefits to the people only if pressured from below by mass struggles. New Deal benefits were won through large-scale union struggles, and civil rights legislation was won through massive African-American “civil disobedience” demonstrations as well as “riots.” Now the unions have been beaten back to a small minority of the work force, and African-American rights are under attack. Elections did not win lasting solutions.

He gives a history and analysis of the U.S. government machinery, demonstrating the severe limits built into its “democracy.” Of course, it is easier for working people and radicals to live under liberal democracy than under fascist or Stalinist totalitarianism. But even the most “democratic” of bourgeois representative democracies cannot be anything but top-down, capitalist-dominated, machines. They exist so that factions of the

capitalist class can settle their differences without much bloodshed, and for keeping the people passive while believing they are “free”.

He writes, “A strategy for change that is focused on elections and political parties tends to focus on electing leaders to gain power in the State, to make gains for us.... An electoralist strategy leads to the development of political machines in which mass organisations look to professional politicians and party operatives.” (p. 231)

Electoralist socialists may also engage in other activities, such as strike support work or community organising. Wetzel is for working with them in such activities, forming united fronts where it is possible.

### **Two Forms of Prefigurative Politics**

Wetzel also criticises the programme advocated by many anarchists which is sometimes called “dual power” or “counter institutions” and which he calls “evolutionary anarchism.” The idea is to build communities, small businesses, and local associations which are non-capitalist and non-statist. They could be consumer cooperatives, worker-managed enterprises (producer cooperatives), farmer-consumer associations, land trusts, credit unions, cooperative housing, independent progressive schools, and so on. These would expand until they overwhelmed capitalism and the state. (I call this the “kudzu strategy.”) There is nothing new about this. P.J. Proudhon, the first person to call himself an “anarchist,” proposed just such an approach. Today it is advocated, Wetzel notes, by the Libertarian Socialist Caucus of the DSA, among others.

He is not against forming food coops or worker-run companies. These can be good in themselves. But he rejects this as a *strategy* for overcoming capitalism. The market is even more of a capitalist institution than the state! Various sorts of cooperatives have been built and thrived under capitalism, mainly at the periphery of the economy. They are no threat to capitalism as a whole.

Coops rarely have the capital necessary to compete with the giant corporations at the heart of the system. They are dominated by the cycles of the market. And if they did become a threat, the government would step in. You may ignore the state, but it will not ignore you. If coops became dangerous to the system, they would be outlawed and crushed by the government.

Wetzel makes “a distinction between two different kinds of organisations: (a) *mass organisations of struggle* (such as worker unions, tenant organisations, etc. (b) organisations that *manage a social resource* (such as a worker cooperative, social centre, child care cooperative, land trust, and so on).” (p. 214) In his view, “the syndicalist strategy of building worker-controlled unions (and other grassroots democratic organisations) that operate through rank-and-file participation and direct collective action is indeed a strategy to build counter-power.” (pp. 218-219) And to prepare for revolution.

### **Anti-Leninism and the Militant Minority**

The heirs of Lenin have many variations of Leninism. They range from advocates of Stalinist and Maoist totalitarianism to the many varieties of Trotskyism to the libertarian-autonomous Marxism of C.L.R. James and Raya Dunayeskaya.

Wetzel focuses on Leninism as the strategy of building a top-down centralised homogeneous party, one which aims at overthrowing the capitalist state in a revolution. It would replace it with a new state, ruled by the party. The centralised party would rule the centralised state which would control the centralised economy – eventually on a world scale. That such a party, whatever its original working class democratic ideals, would end up completely authoritarian, should not be surprising.

Wetzel is aware that the population does not spontaneously become revolutionary all at once in a homogenous wave. Instead, individuals, groups, layers, become radicalised, separately over time, as radicalisation spreads through the mass of people. Syndicalists have long recognised the existence of a “militant minority” among the working class. Wetzel seeks to organise networks of militant workers (and militant community organisers, militant African-American activists, etc.). And among these to build revolutionary libertarian socialist political organisations, to be active in broader mass organisations. This has been called (awkwardly) “dual-organisationalism.”

Like the Leninist vanguard party, the libertarian socialist organisation is formed to advance a

programme, develop its ideas, and coordinate the activities of its militants. Unlike the Leninist vanguard party, it does not aim to take power for itself, to take over mass organisations, or to rule a new state. It exists only to encourage the workers and oppressed people to organise themselves and fight for their own liberation. Naturally its internal organisation must be democratic and federated, rather than the “democratic centralism” of Leninism.

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Besides giving an excellent brief history of the Russian Revolution, Wetzel provides an analysis of the Stalinist social system which existed in the USSR, Eastern Europe, Maoist China, and elsewhere. He sees the “bureaucratic control class” as taking over and collectively establishing a system of exploitation of the workers and peasants. It needed an extremely authoritarian state. In my opinion this is accurate. Unfortunately he regards this as a new system of exploitation, as unlike capitalism as it is unlike

feudalism. He does not name the system, but various theorists have called it “bureaucratic collectivism” or “coordinatorism.”

In my opinion, Stalinist Russia was a variant of capitalism, best called “state capitalism.” The state (composed of the bureaucratic ruling class) was an instrument of capital accumulation, the “personified agent of capital” as Marx called the bourgeoisie. It was pressured by competition on the world market with other national states and international corporations, as well as internal competition among internal agencies. The workers are bought on the labour market (selling their commodity of labour power), hired to work for money wages or salaries, produce goods for sale (commodities) which are worth more than their pay, and buy back consumer goods with their money. This realises a surplus (profit) for the rulers. Officially it had a “planned economy,” but it never fulfilled its plans! And finally, after years of stagnation, it broke down and devolved into traditional capitalism. A similar process happened in China, but it kept its Communist Party



dictatorship and state domination of the now openly capitalist market.

However, in practice there is little political difference between new system theories and state capitalist theories (although “state capitalism” gives a better explanation of how Soviet Russia could transform into traditional capitalism). The basic point is that Leninist-type parties in power create authoritarian, exploitative, systems.

### **The New Society**

Wetzel’s presents a programme for a post-revolutionary, post-capitalist, society, after the capitalists have been expropriated and their state dismantled. He believes in a new system composed of self-managed associations and communities, organised into directly democratic councils and assemblies. They would be associated horizontally through chosen delegates. These would be from the ranks of the people, for limited periods, and recallable at any time.

A stateless society would need means for settling disputes, coordinating activities (“planning”), as well as protecting people from antisocial actors (protection is not the same as seeking revenge or punishment). But this must not be a socially-alienated bureaucratic institution

which stands over the rest of society, enforcing the interests of an exploiting minority – that is, a state. A workers’ or popular militia could replace the established police and army – so long as is necessary. A federation of communes and self-managed industries might be called a “polity” or even, he says, a “government” but it is not a state. (I would not use “government.” although Peter Kropotkin did at times.)

The “economy” of a free society would not be distinct from other aspects of society. In particular, Wetzel rejects the notion of centralised top-down economic planning. He cites the bad example of the Soviet Union, but would oppose it even under planners appointed by an elected government. Society is too complicated to be understood and managed by a small central group, no matter how brilliant they may be. A few top planners would tend to be corrupted by the power accumulated by their position. A centrally planned economy must have a centrally organised state. Instead, it is necessary for everyone to be involved in organising, planning and decision making, at every level and in every way.

Similarly Wetzel rejects “market socialism.” This originally meant using central planning to imitate the market. By now it usually means worker-managed enterprises competing on the market. Democratically run by the workers, they would compete just like capitalist businesses except that there are no capitalists. (A system like this existed in Yugoslavia under Tito’s reign, with competing companies, socially owned, directed by their workers’ councils. For decades, it worked as well as traditional capitalism or the Stalinist system.)

Such an economy cannot be regarded as democratic, despite the workers councils in each enterprise. The overall system is “managed” by the uncontrolled marketplace, not the working people. The business cycle of booms and busts would dominate the worker’s cooperatives. Some would do well and others would do poorly, as businesses do in the U.S.A. The poorer enterprises would have to fire workers in bad times. In order to regulate the market, there would have to be a centralised state (Yugoslavia had a dictatorship). The workers’ councils of each enterprise might hire professional managers, as they did in Yugoslavia. These would crystallise into a “bureaucratic control” class. Over time, the system would devolve toward traditional capitalism.

For a positive programme, Wetzel has been influenced by several sources, especially Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel’s programme of Parecon (“Participatory Economics”). Factories, offices, and other workplaces would be managed by the workers’ involved. If the workers do not govern themselves, then some other class will govern them. Work would be reorganised so there would be an end to order-givers standing over order-takers. An ecological technology would be created. But there would not be independent, competing, enterprises. They would be federated and networked – coordinated by recallable delegates and group decisions.

In turn, communities, neighbourhoods, and consumer groups would also be organised into assemblies, federated together. The two federations, community and producer, are composed of the same people but organised differently, in a “dual governance” or “bi-cameral” system. By dialogue and negotiation they would coordinate economic and political decisions. There would be many “distributive” centres of initiative and cooperation.



I will not go into detail about Wetzel's proposed libertarian socialist economy. He does not support Kropotkin's communist-anarchist approach, which was similar to Marx's vision of the "final stage" of full communism, governed by "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs." Rather he proposes to motivate workers by "paying" them, usually according to the time they work – plus "allowances" for those not able yet to work. He proposes a "non-market pricing system" so goods and services may be produced according to need and availability.

I will not evaluate Wetzel's proposals. I am not against them but neither would I endorse them – beyond the general conception of a decentralised federation of self-governing, collectivised, industries and communities. In the tradition of Errico Malatesta, I expect that different communities, regions, and countries will experiment. They will likely try out various methods of social production, distribution of goods, ways of self-government, education, social defence, techniques of federating, types of

technology, and so on. They will choose what they think is best. While it is good to speculate, it is too soon to propose a specific system.

### Conclusion: The Revolutionary Strategy

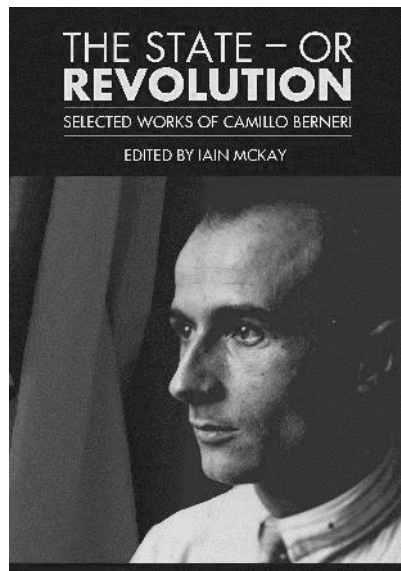
Tom Wetzel advocates an approach to achieve syndicalist libertarian ecosocialism. He is not necessarily opposed to individuals voting in elections or building food cooperatives, but he does not think either is a strategy for overcoming capitalism. He proposes a strategy of non-electoral independent movements and organisations, democratically organised from below, with popular participation and active engagement. The axis of these movements must be labour, because of its centrality in production and the economy. But every sector of the population which is oppressed and exploited has to be included and mobilised. A militant minority, political organisations of revolutionary libertarian socialists, committed to this strategy, needs to be organised as part of the popular mobilisation. This is a strategy for revolution. Without using the label, Wetzel has produced a major work of anarchism.

## Camillo Berneri, Revisted

*Black Flag* marked the assassination of Italian anarchist Camillo Berneri by Stalinists during the May Days in Barcelona in our Summer 2022 issue. Like so many non-English language anarchists, awareness of his writings is not widespread in the English-speaking movement, being limited to a few important essays (primarily *Peter Kropotkin: His Federalist Ideas*) and a few articles translated in 1978 for *The Cienfuegos Press Anarchist Review*.

As such, it is good to announce that Freedom Press has published *The State – Or Revolution: The Selected Works of Camillo Berneri* (London: Freedom Press, 2023).

This has been a long time coming. Immediately after his murder, *Spain and the World* indicated that a collection of his writings would be produced but while a few pieces were translated in subsequent years in *War Commentary*, the hoped for book never appeared. Likewise, Cienfuegos Press promised that it would "be publishing *Class*



*War in Spain: Camillo Berneri* which will contain a biography of Berneri and a full collection of his writings" but this, also, did not come to fruition. Since then, translations appeared in *The Raven* and elsewhere but no collection – until now.

The new collection includes full and revised versions of previous translations alongside a few new ones. It includes his most famous works – *A Russian Federalist: Peter Kropotkin* (better known as *Peter Kropotkin: His Federalist Ideas*, *Attractive Work* and *Worker*

*Worship* – and articles on a range of subjects including Marxism, federalism, bureaucracy, anarcho-syndicalism and the Spanish Revolution. He was writing during seismic events like the Bolshevik Revolution, the Red Years (*Biennio Rosso*) and the rise of Fascism in Italy as well as the Spanish Revolution and, as such, his ideas and analysis will be of benefit for anarchists active today.

One article not included in the new collection is his last published one on defending the POUM against the Stalinist, and written prior to his murder on 5 May 1937. As its translators rightly note, Berneri was “one of the most significant anarchist thinkers of the twentieth century”. So, to

mark the publication at long last of a collection of writings by Berneri, we include it here and hope it will encourage our readers to buy the new collection by an important anarchist thinker and activist whose works are still relevant today.

# In Defence of the POUM

**Camillo Berneri**

*L'adunata dei refrattari*, 1 May 1937<sup>1</sup>

The press of the Third International, following the instructions of the government of the USSR, are prosecuting a violent campaign against the POUM, the Unified Workers Marxist Party of Spain.

The tendentiousness and violence of this campaign is unprecedented.

The Bolshevik journalist Michel Koltsov has described all the activists of the POUM as despicable and has reported that ‘the detachments of the POUM belonging to the international brigades were dissolved and their commander expelled from the Madrid front’ (*L'Humanité*, Paris, 24 Jan 1937). The ‘entryist’ Italian Communist newspaper *Il Grido del Popolo* in Paris (14 March 1937) states in one of its reports from Barcelona:

And what of the Trotskyists of the POUM? In the midst of this great enthusiasm, this heroic new effort that the people are engaged in, these agents of fascism organised over the course of several days for a truck to drive around the city with an enormous inscription stating: ‘We are organising the struggle against fascism at the front and the struggle against reformism in the rear!’

These counterrevolutionaries have plumbed such depths that they hide away from fighting against fascism at the front but are happy to fight against reformism in the rear, that is to say against the efforts of the Popular Front to put the nation on a war footing. But the people of Spain, by meting out justice to these bandits, are marching directly to victory!

In Spain the press and the representatives of the PSUC [Unified Socialist Party of Cataluña, the Catalan affiliate of the Third International] use similar language. *Mundo Obrero*, the mouthpiece of the Communist Party of Spain, affirmed in the edition of 29 January 1937:

We must struggle without pause against the Trotskyists. They are the greatest collaborators of Franco in our country... The POUM represents the most advanced position of the enemy in our own camp...

In every revolutionary movement the most dangerous elements are those who hide behind the guise of friendship in order to murder from behind. In every war the most dangerous elements are not the enemies in the opposing trenches, but the spies and saboteurs. And the POUM is an example of this.

In its edition of 27 January 1937, *Ahora*, mouthpiece of the United Socialist Youth (JSU), stated: ‘Let us liquidate once and for all this fraction of the fifth column. The Soviet people, with their implacable justice against the group of Trotskyist saboteurs and murderers, have shown us the way’.

Joan Comorera, an influential representative of the PSUC and of the UGT [Socialist trade union] in the Catalan government, said in his speech of 24 January 1937: ‘Those who criticise the Council of the Generalitat [the Catalan government] are agents provocateurs who come from the social underworld’. And he further added: ‘Death, not to fascism which has already been liquidated on the field of battle, but to the agents provocateurs’. At the same rally, Uribe, the Communist deputy, proclaimed: ‘To win the war it is necessary to remove the cancer of Trotskyism’, and Carrillo, general secretary of the JSU, affirmed that ‘The policy of the Trotskyists – by saying that they are struggling for the social revolution – is the policy of the invaders, is the policy of the fascists.’ Even the UGT press has published absurdities such as: ‘The radio stations of Turin and Bolzano [in fascist Italy] are perfectly synchronised with *La Batalla* [the POUM daily newspaper] and with the POUM’s radio stations’ (*Claridad*, 26 January 1937).

The defamation of the POUM is of such a scale that it is worth compiling examples as documentary evidence of the bad faith of the Comintern and its centrist priests. It is sufficient to remember, citing one example among many, that the newspaper of the Norwegian Communist Party *Ny Tid* (in its editions of 28 January and 16 February 1937) even insinuated that Maurín, shot by the fascists, was still alive and well and strolling unmolested around the streets of Burgos [capital city of

<sup>1</sup> <https://abcwithdannyandjim.substack.com/p/in-defence-of-the-poum-camillo-berneri>

the Francoist zone].<sup>1</sup> That the campaign against the POUM was dreamt up in Moscow is one of many pieces of evidence that we have obtained through journalists, such as the obliging Koltsov, who have directed their attacks with the help of the Russian Consul, just as the Russian Consul in Barcelona published a note accusing *La Batalla* of having ‘sold out to international fascism’.

Moscow prevented anti-fascist Spain from providing Trotsky with asylum and vetoed the POUM’s presence in the Junta de Defensa [defence council] of Madrid and in the Council of the Generalitat in Cataluña. Moscow desires a *strong government* from which we would be excluded (‘those who insult the USSR’). The slander and threats were followed by highly regrettable deeds: in Madrid the headquarters of the POUM youth was invaded and wrecked; the newspapers of the POUM were suspended and fined, and both *Treball* [the PSUC newspaper] and *Mundo Obrero* have begun to call for the suppression of the POUM. Obviously, the only beneficiaries of this situation are the fascists. *La Batalla* was suspended for four days by the Council of the Generalitat in Cataluña, and immediately Radio Burgos reported that differences at the heart of the Popular Front had become more severe and that the editor of *La Batalla* had been arrested for publishing violent articles directed against the government in Valencia. And *Le Temps* on 18 March 1937 brought to light telegrams from Burgos and Barcelona in reference to the suspension of the POUM daily under the headline *Political Differences Sharpen*.

What is the attitude of the anarchists to the struggle between the PSUC and the POUM?

The pro-Communist Parisian weekly *Vendredi* in its edition of 26 March 1937 acknowledged, in a report by Marc Bernard, that the anarchists ‘act as a moderating influence between the PSUC and the POUM, two parties engaged in an increasingly bitter conflict... They insist that all efforts should be directed into the struggle against the common enemy and plead with both one and the other party to adopt a more courteous tone in their discussions.’

And this, in fact, is the truth. A manifesto of the Libertarian Youth of Barcelona puts it as follows:

We are not prepared to join with those who out of simple political ambition attempt to drown certain comrades in shameful discredit by launching gigantic waves of calumny and infamy against them, knowing their claims to be untrue, as is now happening against the Iberian Communist Youth [the JCI – youth wing of the POUM].

Today we cry out with the full force of our lungs: enough! Enough! It is unjust that those with unhealthy ambition are trying to eliminate an organisation which has fought, and which continues to fight, alongside everyone else for the triumph of the Spanish revolution.

In reply to the pogromist speech by Comorera cited above, *Solidaridad Obrera*, mouthpiece of the Catalan CNT, stated in its edition of 6 February 1937:

If comrade Comorera does not take it the wrong way, we’d like to offer him some fraternal advice: be prudent, control your tongue, demonstrate that sense of responsibility that you recommend so much in others, abandon puerile aspirations and work nobly for the common cause without provoking storms of indignation through inopportune interventions. Consider that the old way of doing politics is intolerable, its procedures ill-advised; bear in mind that we live in Cataluña, that we are in the middle of a war and that we are struggling for the revolution.

If you claim that those who *criticise the Council of the Generalitat are agents provocateurs who stir up the underworld* you are breaking the discipline that it is our duty to impose.

In his speech to the municipal session of 12 February 1937, the CNT mayor of Girona, Expedito Durán, affirmed that: ‘It is an absurdity that no one believes – even the one who wrote it – to say that the POUM is in the service of fascism. The POUM has proven itself to be an indisputably antifascist and authentically revolutionary party.’

The CNT and the anarchist press in general made similar declarations.

A party that has seen several leading representatives fall in the struggle (Maurín [sic], [Hipólito] Etchebehere, José Oliver, Germinal Vidal, Pedro Villarose, Louis Blanes etc), and who occupy second place in the struggle against fascism in terms of cadre in the field and losses, cannot be presented as a collection of rogues and ‘agents of Franco-Hitler-Mussolini’ except by hiding the truth and doing outrage to justice. And this is what the press of the Comintern, from *Pravda* to *L’Humanité* and from *Treball* to *Mundo Obrero*, continues to do.

A party that is the predominant influence in certain localities, especially in Cataluña, and which has thousands of men on the various fronts, is not a force to be sniffed at. To speak of suppressing that party, as advocated by some in the PSUC, is more than a crime

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<sup>1</sup> Joaquín Maurín, co-founder and leader of the POUM, was widely assumed to have been killed in the first days of the civil war, when Maurín was in Galicia, which fell to the

military coup. In fact, he was alive, albeit in a fascist prison, his captors having failed to recognise him. (Translator’s note)

against liberty, it is an act of sabotage against the anti-fascist struggle.

What, then, is the POUM?

It was formed in Cataluña in September 1935, as a result of the fusion between the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc [BOC] with the Communist Left and certain revolutionary elements active in the CNT. In 1919 this anarchist leaning union organisation had joined, under the influence of Pestaña, the Communist International, but in 1922 the Congress of Zaragoza reasserted the organisation's autonomy. A group of activists in the CNT remained loyal to the Communist International, albeit criticising certain tactics, and attempted, with Maurín in a leading role, to give a Marxist orientation to the Catalan revolutionary movement. The Communist Party of Spain, formed in 1920 by Borodin, an emissary of the International, was limited to the fusion of nuclei of social democrat sympathisers of Bolshevism. The Communist International imposed a policy that caused numerous splits in the party. A first group split off together with Arquer, Miravittles, Coll, Montserrat, Rodes and others, and in 1930 the Catalan Communist Federation as a whole, finding itself in disagreement with the Muscovite line, was expelled.

The BOC was formed in March 1931 through the fusion of that federation with the opposition group that had left earlier on. It consolidated itself in Cataluña but had other networks of supporters in Asturias, Madrid, Levante and in the south. Highlighting the threat of fascism, the BOC advocated the 'Workers' Alliance'. In September 1935, as a consequence of the fusion of the BOC with the Communist Left, the POUM was formed.

On 19 July 1936 the POUM was at the side of the FAI and the CNT during the heroic resistance to the military-fascist putsch and organised eight thousand men in columns who marched to different fronts.

The POUM cannot be defined as a Trotskyist party, given that it has no direct or important links with Trotsky, who abjures it, nor with his followers, who attack it. There is a small fraction within it which could, in broad brush strokes, be considered Trotskyist, but the majority of Spanish Trotskyists are outside of the POUM.

It is said that the POUM is opposed to the USSR. In reality, however, it glorifies the Russian revolution of October 1917, declares that it would support the defence of the Russian proletariat if it was attacked by a bourgeois state, and unceasingly praises the aid provided by the Russian people to antifascist Spain. On the other hand, it does not burn incense for Stalin or show support for Bolshevik pan-Slavism, and furthermore it denies the right of the government of the

USSR to impose its policy onto the Spanish people in exchange for aid.

Finally, it is also said that the POUM is opposed to the Popular Front. In reality, this party is opposed to the tendency that wants to disassociate the civil war from the social revolution.

The programme of the JCI, which has ten thousand members, was issued in February 1937 and advocated the following:

Repeal of the bourgeois Constitution of 14 April 1931 and dissolution of Parliament: assemblies of delegates from the factory committees, peasants and militias to elect the

revolutionary workers' government; political rights for all young people of eighteen years of age, without distinction of sex; dissolution of the organs of bourgeois justice and creation of a system of workers' justice; the same with regard to the police; purging of the bureaucracy.

The JCI declares that to win the war the following measures are necessary: dissolution of the cadres of the bourgeois army; general mobilisation of the youth; single military command; purging of the war school; the military preparation of the youth; the development of a powerful war industry and the organisation of voluntary and obligatory war work; employment of detained fascists in fortification building.

The JCI does not renounce the proletarian revolution, which in our conception is of a piece with the civil war, and which must create a new proletarian economy, characterised by the socialisation of large industry, of the bank and of the land, a monopoly on foreign trade and the bringing of public services under municipal control.

**Against the dominant opinion and the underhand manoeuvrings of the PSUC we must affirm, energetically and tirelessly, the value of free political pluralism in the union organisations and the absolute necessity of anti-fascist unity of action.**

This programme, whose main points we have highlighted, does not correspond entirely to our current positions or to our aspirations, but none of us can describe it as counterrevolutionary.

If the POUM was the predominant political force in Spain, our criticisms would surely relate to concrete events. But today the POUM constitute a considerable element in the antifascist struggle, as well as in the ranks of those resisting the asphyxiation of the revolution, and therefore our theoretical differences count for little alongside our existing and potential unity on the field of action.

Many aspects of the POUM's critique and many of its slogans correspond to the facts and represent a potential contribution to the development of the Spanish social revolution.

Against the dominant opinion and the underhand manoeuvrings of the PSUC we must affirm, energetically and tirelessly, the value of free political pluralism in the union organisations and the absolute necessity of anti-fascist unity of action. It is vital that we avoid a monk-like silence. It is necessary to say loud and clear that anyone who insults and slanders the POUM and advocates its suppression is a saboteur of the anti-fascist struggle who will not be tolerated.

This position, as well as being appropriate to the seriousness of the moment and responding to the anarchistic spirit, constitutes the best protection against the counterrevolutionary dictatorship that is ever more perceptible in the PSUC's programme of democratic restoration and in the separation of revolution and war advocated by certain myopic and disorientated revolutionaries.

## Parish Notices

Autonomy Now is a non-sectarian, zero budget, DIY project. They organise wide-ranging talks and events in London of interest to anarchists, the anarcho-curious and their friends. They hold a regular ongoing talks series on final Thursdays of the month in Housmans Bookshop next to King's Cross St. Pancras station, plus occasional events in LARC, MayDay Rooms and elsewhere: [autonomynow.noblogs.org](http://autonomynow.noblogs.org)

Comrades in Russia and Belarus are in particular need of solidarity just now. For more information contact Anarchist Black Cross Belarus ([abc-belarus.org/en/main-page](http://abc-belarus.org/en/main-page)), Autonomous Action ([avtonom.org/en](http://avtonom.org/en)), and Derry ABC ([abcireland.wordpress.com](http://abcireland.wordpress.com)).

In 2015, radio makers from Europe (later joined by comrades from the Americas) came together in Ljubljana to form the Anarchist and Antiauthoritarian Radio Network. The network comprises projects of different types: radio shows, podcasts and pirate

radio. They work together on the principles of mutual aid in struggles, with the sharing of information and audio. The various collectives actively work on producing audio materials with libertarian content, where you can search for news, analyses, and comments on important topics from different places across the globe. Why not have a listen: [a-radio-network.org](http://a-radio-network.org)

ForcesWatch is a UK organisation dedicated to investigating militarisation, military ethics and human rights concerns. They expose and challenge unethical military recruitment practices, issues affecting personnel and veterans, and initiatives that aim to build support for war: [forceswatch.net](http://forceswatch.net)

The East Bay Group of Workers Solidarity Alliance has published a new webzine to promote green syndicalism, *Workers Solidarity*. This is not intended to be simply a publication of the East Bay WSA but an independent green syndicalist journal, with

the idea of attracting a variety of voices to participate. Available at: [eastbaysyndicalists.org](http://eastbaysyndicalists.org)

**"Let the Voice of the People be Heard! O—"**  
PARSONS.

**ELEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF  
THE CHICAGO MARTYRS!**

All lovers of liberty are earnestly requested  
to attend the

**Mass Meeting**  
**FRIDAY NOVEMBER 10,**

at the  
**WORKMEN'S CLUB AND INSTITUTE,**  
**CLERKENWELL ROAD, W. C.,**  
(Next to Holborn Town Hall)  
TO COMMEMORATE THE

**Martyrdom of**  
**AUGUST SPIES, ALBERT R. PARSONS,**  
**GEORGE ENGEL, ADOLPH FISCHER AND**  
**LOUIS LINGG,**  
—judicially murdered November 11, 1887—and the imprisonment of  
**SAMUEL FIELDEN, MICHAEL SCHWAB**  
**AND OSCAR NEEBE.**

Special arrangements have been made for Miss **JENNY  
ATKINSON** to sing "Annie Laurie" and other songs  
appropriate to the occasion.

Speakers: **P. KROPOTKIN, LOUISE MICHEL, J. TURNER,**  
**EMMA GOLDMAN** of New York, **W. TCHERKESOV, W. WESS,**  
**LOTHROP WITHINGTON, N. TCHAYKOVSKY, T. del MARMOL.**

**Doors open at 7.30 p.m.**  
**ALL ARE WELCOME.**

**Freedom, October 1899**

# Anarchy and Communism

Le Drapeau Noir (Lyon), 16 September 1883<sup>1</sup>

In thinking of the contradictory discussions that these two names bring up, we think that we aren't engaged in any bad labour by tackling this question head on.

First of all, what does anarchy mean?

For some, it is the struggle, the disorganisation and the destruction of an existing society, while others give it the meaning of living without a boss and without authority. For us, we accept both, but we place them in their respective order.

So currently, we anarchists, in order to arrive at the annihilation of all authority and the suppression of the bosses, we struggle against the tyrannical and governmental oppression, we apply ourselves toward the destruction of speculator organisations, capitalist exploitation, in order to arrive at the goal that we propose to reach, that is to say, to communism; we are thus anarchists, since we employ these means, and we won't be after, since by these very same means we will arrive at the suppression of authority.

This is where the contradiction we mentioned above comes in, and here's why.

Some revolutionary socialists, among them the most militant, claim that libertarian communism cannot exist. We, on the other hand, find it so admissible that it is impossible to refute; anarchist means which are used before and during the Revolution, tending to the regeneration of the whole society, that is to say, to the incontestable equality of each individual, will be necessary for us to centralise all economic elements, so that each one can draw from them an equal share. Therefore, as soon as there is a common cause and a common interest, communism substitutes itself for anarchy and we become, without any transition, *communist-anarchists*.

Often, the objection is that communism creates authority, that everyone should be free to work either individually or communally.



Certainly, we are of the view that each must be free to labour alone and at any kind of labour, but in any case, as it is recognised that anarchy can only exist with the abolition of money and the removal of the wage, by internationalising the whole world and destroying the borders, it is therefore of general necessity that the labour done either communally or separately, returns at a given moment to a communal place, designated in advance for free exchange, import or export. It is materially impossible that an individual practicing any trade, or even several trades, can be self-sufficient by free exchange,

for, let us admit that if he is a shoe-maker, even a locksmith and a carpenter all at the same time, these three trades, although quite different, will not suffice for the needs of his existence, for, if he exchanges his shoe-making for clothes, his locksmithing with a tailor, and his carpentry with a hat-maker, he will still lack the things most necessary for his life. He would still have to find a way to exchange his products with those who can provide him with what he needs.

And so, we can only arrive at a practical result by centralising the labour of each in communal stores, either for the consumption of the country, or for the reciprocal exchange of the different parts of the globe. We are thus forced to recognise that each individual, while remaining totally free in his actions, can only act in common, and by this very fact becomes a libertarian communist. But this in no way takes away his title as anarchist, since he acts under no pressure, without any influence, and his labour is freely done without commandment and without the need to undergo any authority.

We can therefore conclude that communism and anarchy are linked to each other, and if today we are simply anarchists, we will undoubtedly become, after the revolution, anarchist-communists.

<sup>1</sup> <https://mgouldhawke.wordpress.com/2022/12/25/anarchy-and-communism-le-drapeau-noir-1883/>